For Want of Comfort

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For Want of Comfort

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Summary

Driving home late after helping Agent Crawford, someone runs out in front of his car in the fog. He doesn't know it yet, but this encounter will change his life forever.

The Meeting

Hannibal sighed softly as he stared out at the foggy dark road. Another tedious day helping Agent Crawford. Why he had ever allowed Alana to talk him into it, he would never know. He always let Alana have too much sway over him. She was so strong willed, for a beta. She never flinched around alphas, even staring down Jack and Hannibal himself on occasion, but perhaps he shouldn't have gone along with it this time. Jack was very demanding and- though he could be rude at times- Hannibal knew he couldn't kill Jack. It was too close to home.

Hannibal's thoughts were interrupted by a figure darting out into the road in front of him. He slammed on the brakes quickly before hitting the figure, knocking the person to the ground but likely not doing any real damage. If they dented my car… Hannibal got out of his Bentley, moving to the front to give this reckless person what was coming to them, when he stopped short.

Curled on the tarmac, was the small, skinny form of a male omega. The boy was skin and bone, sunken, sapphire blue eyes stared up at Hannibal in terror.

Now, Hannibal always thought himself a gentleman. He never harmed omegas. His belief was they should be protected and cared for, if not pampered. He had never found an omega of his own, as he worried what his… evening activities would be thought of. Yet here was a young man who had obviously been beaten and abused, and had never had a decent meal in his life, and Hannibal felt his Alpha blood boil. He would find whoever did this to this boy, and he would destroy them.

For now, though, the boy needed help.

The boy shuffled back from Hannibal, eyes still wide with terror as he whimpered softly, gripping at his ankle.

Hannibal moved forward slowly, hands out and non-threatening as he knelt. "Let me see," he said softly, using only enough alphaen voice to help soothe and calm, no command behind it. "I have medical training."

The boy hesitated but moved his hand to let Hannibal look.

Hannibal shifted the ankle gently, feeling around. "It looks like a bad sprain," he said softly, "nothing a wrap and a few days off it won't fix."

The boy stared at him, seeming shocked Hannibal was actually helping him, when a distant dog's bark had the boy trying to scramble up and run again.

Hannibal quickly stopped him. "If you run on that, you may ruin your leg completely." He picked the boy up and placed him in the back seat of the Bentley. "It's alright," he murmured softly, "let me help." He climbed back in the driver's seat and drove away before anyone else showed up.

The boy didn't move or speak the entire way to Hannibal's house, curling up in as tight a ball as he could. By the time they got there, the boy was in a fitful sleep.

Hannibal parked in the garage, closing the door before getting out and opening the back door. The boy jumped, eyes snapping open again, darting around the small space.

"It's alright," Hannibal said softly, reaching out slowly, "here…"

The boy's lips came back ever so slightly as if to snarl, but too scared to actually do so. Hannibal stilled, waiting for the boy to calm enough for him to reach forward and take him inside. Eventually, the boy shuffled forward to the open car door so Hannibal could reach him easier. The boy was silent as Hannibal scooped him up, he weighed so little… But Hannibal kept his mind on the task at hand, but he heard the small noises coming from him as the boy scented him.

Hannibal smiled slightly as he took the boy into the large ensuite in the master bedroom and set him on the toilet lid before turning to begin a bath. He turned back to the boy.

"Let's do this right, shall we?" He smiled gently. "My name is Hannibal. What's yours?"

The boy was silent for a long time, his bright blue eyes darting around nervously before murmuring, "W-Will… Will Graham…"

Hannibal's smile grew. "It's nice to meet you, Will," he said softly. "Do you think you can bathe by yourself?" The boy- Will- thought for a minute before nodding slightly. Hannibal nodded. "Alright, while you do that, I'll see if I can find you some fresh clothes, alright? Take your time, and when you're done, I'll wrap that ankle for you."

He stood and moved out of the room. He found some gray lounge pants and a red cabled sweater for Will, as well as some fresh underwear and socks. He brought them into the bathroom, placing them on the counter and picking up Will's filthy discarded clothes, carefully not looking at Will naked in the tub. "Here are some fresh clothes. I'll be downstairs in the kitchen when you're ready. Try not to put too much weight on that ankle, yes? Call out if you need anything."

"A-alright…" Will mumbled softly, still sounding scared, but he at least was answering Hannibal when he spoke.

Hannibal nodded slightly, moving down to the kitchen and working on some food for the skinny boy, nothing too extravagant or heavy. If the boy's appearance was anything to go off of, he doubted that the omega's stomach could handle much yet. Hannibal would have to take it slow, keep it simple and help the boy get healthy.

Eventually, a soft shuffling near the doorway announced the arrival of Will. Hannibal looked up to find the omega peeking around the doorframe at him, looking not quite so terrified, but still scared and maybe a little shy, his hair, now that it was washed, hung around his face in chocolate ringlets.

Hannibal smiled, wiping his hands on the towel draped over his shoulder. "Come on in, Will. Take a seat. I'm almost finished with this and then I'll wrap your ankle."

Will slowly came into the room, using the wall for support so as not to put too much weight on the ankle, as Hannibal had instructed. He looked even smaller in the new clothes, the cuffs of both the pants and sweater rolled up so his hands and feet were visible.

Hannibal smiled encouragingly, setting the soup to simmer while he pulled out the first aid kit and moved over to Will. Will leaned away ever so slightly, but he stayed still and let Hannibal work. Hannibal moved slowly, making sure Will saw each touch coming before doing so.

“There. You should still stay off it as much as possible, but it will heal properly now.” Hannibal stood and moved over to dish up the soup.

Will nodded slightly, eyes down but they widened when Hannibal brought him a bowl of soup. Hannibal smiled and set it on the table in front of him. Will took the bowl, his stomach growled loudly, but he stayed still, looking up at Hannibal, as if waiting for permission to eat. Hannibal nodded his permission. Will dove into the food almost desperately, reminding Hannibal almost of the orphanage… eat fast, or someone else will take it from you.

“You’re safe here, Will,” Hannibal said gently. He got his own bowl and took a seat opposite him at the breakfast nook table. “No one is going to hurt you. No one is going to take anything from you.”

Will looked up at Hannibal, eyes almost disbelieving, but he did slow down, eating slower, a small yummy sound or two slipping out as he did.

Hannibal smiled, relaxing and eating his own soup as well. At the orphanage, before he had found his voice to tell the director his name, he had learned how to eat hunched forward, arms around the plate or bowl to protect it as he shoveled the food quickly. The memory sent a shiver down his spine.

That was a long time ago, he reminded himself.

Will finished his soup fairly quickly, squirming slightly in his seat and directing the soft, "Th-Thank you…" towards the bowl rather than Hannibal himself.

Hannibal smiled. "There is more, if you think your stomach can handle it."

Will looked up, eyes wide. "I… can have more?" he asked, surprised.

"Of course." Hannibal stood, reaching out. "Pass me your bowl and I'll get you some more."

Will slowly picked up the bowl, hands shaking slightly as he held it out.

Hannibal returned, handing him the freshly filled bowl. "Try to eat even more slowly. I wouldn't want you to get a stomach ache."

Will took it, eyes wide. "Th-thank you…" he whispered, still seeming shocked by Hannibal's kindness.

"You're quite welcome, Will," Hannibal said, settling back in his chair.

Will ate slowly, looking up at Hannibal before looking at the bowl again,

"Is… there anything to drink?" He asked softly.

Hannibal nodded. "I have water, milk, and juice." He glanced toward the wine pantry, but he was sure that even if Will was of drinking age, his stomach wouldn't be able to handle anything like that yet. "Which would you prefer?"

Will looked up, swallowing slightly. "J-juice?" he asked, almost tentatively, as if the wrong answer would get his ears boxed.

Hannibal stood, getting down two glasses and the juice and returning to the table. He poured himself a glass as well, to show Will it was safe, taking a drink as he passed Will his glass.

Will took it, drinking slowly, not so worried it might be taken away now.

"I don't want to pry, Will," Hannibal said softly, "but, can you tell me what you were running from?"

Will stiffened, looking up, his eyes returning to terror.

"I need to know what to expect," Hannibal explained. "It'll be easier to protect you if I know what I'm protecting you from. That is, if you'd want my protection."

Will looked down again, hugging himself slightly. "D-Dimmond's… Dimmond's auction house…"

Hannibal knew of it, if only by reputation. Dimmond's… the Omega auction house where they bought young omegas and sold them to the highest bidder… never really caring about the state of their 'stock' before auctions...

Hannibal tried to hold back a snarl.

Will shrank back into his seat slightly, eyes wide.

"I apologize," Hannibal said softly, trying to keep his tone gentle. "I'm not angry with you. I do not like that place, nor the people who run it."

Will nodded slowly, relaxing a little. "I… I don't wanna go back…"

"You don't have to," Hannibal assured him. "I will protect you for as long as you want."

Will looked up at him, eyes wide. Hannibal smiled encouragingly. Will was silent for a moment before tilting his head slightly to bare his neck.

Hannibal's eyes widened, shaking his head. "No, Will. Mating should be done for love, not payment. You are your own. If you find that you want to leave, I won't hold you back."

"Wh-what… do you want in return…?" Will asked softly, looking at his lap. What had this boy been through to make him so frightened…

"I want you to find peace," Hannibal said softly. "I want you to be happy. That is all."

Will looked up again, confused. "W-why? You barely know me…"

Hannibal studied Will for a long moment before answering. His blue eyes and soft curls tugged at Hannibal's memory, though Will's hair was much darker than the little sister he'd lost so long ago. He shook his head. Mischa had nothing to do with this.

"Every omega deserves peace," Hannibal finally said. "I'm not a fool. I can't save all of them, I know that. But you, I can help. I can, and so I will. As long as you'll allow."

Will nodded slowly, before gripping the bottom of the sweater. "B-but… what if they come for me?"

"Then I will protect you."

"They bought me from my pa." Will's voice shook, but he pressed on. "They have a bill of sale… w-wouldn't I… have to go back?" He looked ready to jump up and run again right then, staring at the sweater as if it might stop him.

Hannibal stood, moving slowly around the table to kneel down beside Will's chair. He slowly took Will's hands in his own, the touch gentle. He looked up into those fearful, large blue eyes. "If you don't want to go with them, then I will find a way to protect you. I promise you, Will. Something I hope you'll learn in the time you're with me… I always keep my promises."

Will looked surprised, but he nodded slowly. After hesitating, he pressed forward, pressing his forehead to Hannibal's shoulder, scenting slightly. "Th-Thank you… Hannibal…"

Hannibal managed to fight back the shiver that tried to run through him. "You're welcome, Will."

Will didn't move away for a minute, just relaxing with Hannibal's scent. When he pulled back and looked up at Hannibal again, he yawned suddenly, the belly full of food and the adrenaline leaving him making Will's eyelids droop.

Hannibal smiled, standing and pulling Will up. “Let’s get you to bed.”

Will looked up at him with wide eyes. They got even wider when Hannibal led him to a large guest room.

“It’s not made specifically for an omega,” Hannibal said apologetically. “I hope that’s alright.”

Will didn't answer, staring at the large bed.

“Will…?” Hannibal asked softly.

"I… never had a… bed bed…" he said, "just a cot in pa's trailer…and… at the… the auction house..." He looked down, obviously not wanting to think about that place, let alone the condition of the omegas kept there.

It took Hannibal a moment to respond. “I see… Well… you’re welcome to use it as long as you like.”

Will looked up, eyes bright with excitement, banishing the fear and the terror, if only for a moment. "Really?"

Hannibal felt his heart hammering at the sight of Will. He imagined this was what Will was truly like, without fear. “Of course,” he managed, smiling.

Will smiled up at Hannibal. "Thank you," he said happily.

Hannibal smiled back. “You’re welcome, Will. Sleep well.”

"Good night," Will said before moving to the bed.

"Hanaba!" Mischa called back to him as the soldiers carried her out, "Hanaba!" Her scared face as the door closed was the last time Hannibal saw her, until he found the milk teeth in the bottom of his soup bowl…

No…

"Hannibal!" Will cried, reaching back for him as he was dragged away, eyes tearful, "Hannibal, please!"

"H-Hannibal?" A hand touched his shoulder, shaking him slightly. "Hannibal?"

Hannibal surged upright, gasping as if he'd been doused in ice water. His heart hammered painfully in his chest as he felt the grief welling up inside him. He looked around the dark room, adrenaline and panic still coursing through him from the dreams.

Will was standing by him. His wide eyes twinkled slightly in the light of the digital clock. "Y-you were calling out…" he said softly, "are… you alright?"

Hannibal covered his mouth as he felt the familiar acid burn in his throat that he always got when he'd dream of Mischa. He closed his eyes, taking deep breaths to calm himself. That was a long time ago. We've moved past it. We've…

Hannibal opened his eyes again and lowered his hand. "It was a nightmare," he said. His voice was hoarse, from sleep or calling out or nearly vomiting, he wasn't sure. He cleared his throat and tried again. "Just a dream."

Will looked down. "Oh…" he said softly

There was silence for a long moment before.

"...are you ok?" Will asked again softly.

Hannibal took a shaky breath and nodded. "I'm alright." He looked at the young omega. "Why are you up Will?"

Will shook his head slightly. "Couldn't sleep… too scared…"

Hannibal glanced over at the clock. It was four in the morning. He sighed and got up. "Let's get some breakfast."

Will looked up at Hannibal again and nodded slightly. "Ok…"

"Let me get cleaned up and I'll meet you in the kitchen, alright?" Hannibal smiled at Will.

Will nodded, slipping silently towards the door. The only thing announcing his departure was the soft click of the door closing behind him.

Hannibal sighed, moving to the connected bathroom. Flipping on the light, he moved over to the sink to wash his face, hoping to wash away the memory of the dream. This was not something he'd anticipated. It had been so long since he'd dreamt of his sister's death…

He shook his head and focused on what he was doing. I promised to protect him, and I will.

Will was sitting quietly in the breakfast nook when Hannibal came in, looking worried and sad.

Hannibal smiled when he saw Will, but it slipped a little when he saw the worry. "Are you alright, Will? Is your ankle bothering you?"

Will looked up at him before looking at his hands again. "I just…"

Hannibal moved closer, waiting patiently for Will to find the words.

"I don't like… being so scared…" Will said softly, his hands balling into fists. "I don't want to be… but… I just…"

"Can you keep a secret, Will?" Hannibal asked.

Will looked up, nodding slightly.

"I work as a psychologist," Hannibal said, taking a seat so he could meet Will's eye level. "I listen to all sorts of people, how they feel and all of the things they go through, and I try to help them. The secret I'm going to tell you… everyone is afraid. Everyone has things they worry about. Every single person, regardless of designation."

"E-even you?" Will asked softly.

Hannibal nodded. “I have managed to hide it most of my adult life,” he said, “but yes. I still feel fear.”

Will seemed surprised by that before looking at his hands again. "M-my pa… was always afraid…"

Hannibal nodded in understanding. “Some people have a more difficult time dealing with the fear.”

Will sighed, his shoulders seeming to relax slightly. "If… everyone is afraid… why can people be so brave too? You were. You saved me without even hesitating."

“Bravery is not the absence of fear,” Hannibal said. “It’s being able to do what you must despite the fear.”

Will nodded slightly, sighing softly. "I wonder if I could be brave like that," he said softly.

“I am certain you could,” Hannibal assured him. He stood again. “For now… how about some breakfast?”

Will smiled. "Y-yes, please," he said softly.

Hannibal nodded and got to work. Will watched Hannibal cook, awed by how easily he moved around the kitchen. Soon enough, a plate of warm scrambled eggs, sausage, and toast, was placed in front of him.

Hannibal set down his own plate and sat down. "Bon appetit."

"This is… all for me?" Will asked softly, looking up at Hannibal.

"Of course," Hannibal said. "And there's more, if you're still hungry after this."

Will looked at the food again. "Thank you…" he said softly.

"You're most welcome," Hannibal said, smiling. "Remember, don't eat too quickly or you will upset your stomach."

Will nodded slightly, eating slowly and smiling. "It's really good!" he said happily.

Hannibal smiled. "I'm glad you like it."

Will finished his food, sighing softly as he sat back, relaxing slightly against the seat.

When Hannibal finished he smiled. "How are you feeling?"

Will looked up at Hannibal, seeming to be getting more used to looking at the alpha rather than shrink away. "Full…" he said softly.

Hannibal smiled. "Good."

Will smiled. "Thank you… for the food… for everything…"

"You're most welcome," Hannibal, standing to clean up.

Will nodded slightly, settling further into the seat as his eyes drooped again. When Hannibal finished cleaning up, he turned to find Will asleep in his seat.

"Will?" Hannibal called softly, putting a gentle hand on Will's shoulder.

Will sighed softly, leaning slightly into the warmth of Hannibal's hand, but didn't wake. Hannibal sighed softly, carefully scooping him up, moving slowly in case he woke up, and carried him upstairs to the bedroom. Will moaned softly, pressing closer to Hannibal's warm chest, still fast asleep. Hannibal purred softly, humming deep in his chest as he carried Will into the bedroom.

It was a day or so later, Will's ankle was healing well, and Hannibal had begun to tutor Will. He had noticed Will seeming interested in his library, but learned that Will had only gone to school until his mother had disappeared and he had presented. Hannibal was more than happy to help, giving him lessons in the evenings after he returned from work. Today was Hannibal's day off, he was working on lunch while Will sat in the den's window seat, reading one of the books Hannibal had suggested near his reading level. Just as Hannibal was about to put the food in the oven, there was a thump from the den and Will came scrambling in, ducking behind Hannibal and gripping at his sleeve, eyes wide.

Hannibal looked down at him. "Will, what-"

A heavy knock at the door made Will duck further behind Hannibal, a small whimper slipping out.

Hannibal closed the oven and set the timer. "Will, I want you to stay in here. I want you to stay quiet. If I'm not back when the timer goes off, open the oven and turn off the heat. Do you understand?"

Will nodded, looking towards the door. At another knock, Will shrank back slightly.

"Everything is going to be fine," Hannibal assured him as he took his cooking apron off and hung it on its hook. He moved out to the entryway and opened the front door.

Jack turned to him, nodding slightly. "Doctor Lecter," he said in greeting.

Hannibal sighed. "Hello, Jack. Did you need something?"

Jack sighed, holding up a folder. "Had a case for you to look at. You weren't answering your phone."

"I have been busy," Hannibal said, taking the folder and opening it.

Jack nodded slightly, probably assuming that one of his patients had needed emergency advice or something.

A few moments later, Jack sniffed slightly, looking confused. "Is that-?"

Hannibal didn't look up, not catching Jack's confusion. "I have something in the oven."

Jack stared at Hannibal for a long moment. "That's an omega, Hannibal," he said softly.

Hannibal looked up slowly. "Yes. A… guest of mine."

Jack raised an eyebrow but nodded slightly. "I'm sorry for interrupting your lunch like this…"

"That's alright," Hannibal said, looking at the file again. "As you said, I wasn't answering my phone." Finally he closed the file and gave his analysis.

Jack nodded, taking the file. "Thank you, Doctor Lecter. I guess I'll leave you to it. Good luck."

"It's not-" Hannibal started, feeling the need to explain. Alphas were not known for having omegas as friends.

Jack shrugged slightly and nodded. "Until later, then. Goodbye."

Hannibal sighed again, shaking his head and closed the door.

He moved back into the kitchen, the oven was off and the door was opened, like he asked, but Will was nowhere to be seen.

Hannibal looked around, feeling fear rise in him. "Will?"

A slight shuffle under the breakfast nook table and Will looked out, looking around worriedly.

Hannibal sighed softly. "There you are."

"I-Is it safe?" Will asked softly, coming out and looking at the door worriedly.

Hannibal nodded. "It was someone I work with on occasion, Agent Jack Crawford." He moved forward to help Will out. "He's gone now."

"Oh…" Will said, standing and sighing softly. "S-sorry…"

"It's alright," Hannibal said gently. "You didn't know."

Will sighed softly. "I saw the car pull up and I…"

"I understand," Hannibal said gently. "I left my phone upstairs and he couldn't get ahold of me. I do have visitors on occasion, but you needn't worry about them."

Will nodded slightly. "O-Ok…"

As they ate lunch together, Hannibal took a moment to look at Will. He already looked much better, his cheeks filling out slightly and his eyes not as sunken. He was still thin, but soon enough, he would start to fill out more. Will was getting better at asking when he wanted or needed something, asking for more food, or a glass of juice. He smiled and thanked Hannibal

whenever he brought him something, looking him in the eyes instead of his shoes or over his shoulder.

Later that evening, after dinner, Will came into the den, carrying a book with him and looking nervous.

Hannibal was in his favorite chair beside the fireplace, a wine glass in one hand and a news article pulled up on his tablet in the other. He looked up and smiled when he saw Will. “Hello, Will. Would you like to join me?” He set his glass down and motioned to the other chair near the fire.

Will nodded slightly, but didn't move to sit, shifting nervously.

Hannibal set down the tablet next to the wine glass, giving Will his full attention. “What’s the matter, Will?”

Will swallowed, gripping the book tighter before saying softly. "Could… could you read to me? P-please?"

Hannibal smiled and nodded, holding his hand out for the book. “I’d love to, Will.”

Will beamed, handing Hannibal the book before sitting down quickly.

Hannibal smiled, turning the book and opening the front cover. “The Iliad, by Homer. Written eight-hundred B.C.E.” He smiled again and continued reading.

Will listened intently, a rapt smile on his face, seemingly inthralld. Hannibal enjoyed the experience, watching Will’s delight as much as possible.

They were part way through when Will started yawning.

Hannibal lowered the book. “I think we might need to stop there.”

"Can… we read more tomorrow?" Will asked, looking hopeful.

Hannibal smiled and nodded. “We can.”

Will smiled happily and stood, stretching. "Thank you… for reading. It's a cool story."

“I’ve always enjoyed it,” Hannibal agreed, sliding a bookmark in and closing the book.

Will nodded slightly, looking down shyly.

Hannibal stood. “Is everything alright, Will?”

Will moved forward, hugging Hannibal quickly before pulling away, his ears bright pink. "G-Good night, Hannibal," he said quickly before hurrying to his room.

Hannibal smiled to himself, picking up the now empty wine glass to return it to the kitchen. “Good night, Will,” he said softly, knowing Will probably wouldn’t hear him, nor see the

slight flush of his own ears.

It was around dinner time the next day, when another knock came to the door. Will stiffened, looking up at Hannibal from where he was cutting the vegetables, his grip on the knife tightening slightly.

Hannibal wiped his hands on his dish towel before setting it down on the counter and began untying his apron. “Stay in here, please, Will. I’ll be back shortly.” He hung the apron on its hook and made his way to the front door. Before he could do more than open his mouth to greet the strangers, the one in front spoke.

"Good evening, sir," a thin oily looking man said, grinning up at Hannibal. Behind him stood a large, gorilla of a man, who looked to have the same amount of brains as one too. Both betas, going by the smell. "We are on the lookout for a lost boy, and intelligence suggests that your car was spotted around where he disappeared. We would like to check for him, if you wouldn't mind."

“I do mind, actually,” Hannibal said, his back straight and his hand tight on the door handle, ready to close it in their faces if it came to that. “This is private property.”

The man sighed softly, looking at the gorilla and shaking his head as if he couldn't believe it. "Let's rephrase… we know he's here, and we'd like him back."

“You cannot have him,” Hannibal said simply.

The oily man sighed. "That boy cost our boss a pretty penny, and he would like him back. After all, we have to sell the brat to pay his dear father the dowry."

Hannibal had to bite back a snarl. “I am willing to settle that account, but you may not enter,” he said.

The oily man shook his head slightly, the gorilla started popping his knuckles, frowning at Hannibal.

Oily chuckled. "You don't want that brat. He's a feral bitch. He stabbed one of our handlers before his little escape. He's got to pay for that." The gorilla grinned at that, looking excited at the thought of punishing Will for what he'd done.

"I am willing to pay for damages done as well," Hannibal said, trying to keep his composure when his instincts were begging for blood. "If that is unacceptable then I believe we are at an impasse and I'd have to ask you to leave." He pulled out his card and threw it at the oily man. "Call me when you've changed your disposition."

The man caught the card, sighing. "I'll have to talk to the boss."

Hannibal nodded. “Have a nice day.” He shut the door before they could say more or attempt to enter, locking it with the dead bolt and chain. Sighing, he turned to return to the kitchen.

Will stood in the middle of the kitchen, knife still in hand, looking at Hannibal with dark eyes. He raised the knife between them in both hands. "Why did you…" he started, "why did

you give them your card?"

“Will, please put the knife down,” Hannibal said calmly.

"They'll come back!" Will cried. "You promised you'd protect me! I thought you were different!"

Hannibal felt himself starting to snarl and had to take a slow breath to calm down. “I said I would protect you, and I will. I also said that if you grew dissatisfied with my protection, you were free to leave whenever you wished. I had hoped you would trust me to do what must be done, but if you believe that I have or will fail you, I’ll not stop you. If, however, you’d put the knife down, I’d be willing to discuss my plans to protect you.”

Will sobbed softly, the knife slipped from his shaking fingers as he sank to his knees, tears rushing down his cheeks as he shook. "I don’t wanna go," he said softly, "I really like it here… but if the boss knows I'm-" He cut off with a shuddering sob, eyes shut tight.

Hannibal knelt down, moving the knife out of Will’s reach before pulling out his handkerchief to wipe at Will’s tears. “As you said when you first arrived, they have a bill of sale. As much as I despise the laws around it, it is still the law, and I must act within those boundaries. I’m going to pay the bill of sale, and any damages they claim, because once those debts are covered, you can be free. They can not legally take you. No one can buy you or sell you or make you do anything you don’t want to do.”

Will looked at Hannibal, eyes flashing. "I won't apologize for stabbing him… he was trying to put a Submission collar on me. I won't be scruffed. Not by them."

“You don’t have to,” Hannibal assured him.

Will shook his head. "B-but… how could I repay-"

“You don’t have to,” Hannibal said again. “I promised you that I would protect you. I didn’t ask for payment, and I don’t want it.”

Will was silent a long time, before shuffling forward and pressing against Hannibal's chest, shaking with more sobs. "Please don't let me go back…"

Hannibal wrapped his arms around Will, purring softly to soothe him. “I won’t let them take you, Will. I promise.”

Will nodded weakly, gripping Hannibal's waistcoat tightly. "Th-The boss… he scares me…"

“I will protect you,” Hannibal murmured.

"I'm glad you found me…"

“As am I, Will.”

Will sighed softly, not wanting to move away.

"Come on," Hannibal said softly. "Let's finish dinner."

Hannibal got a call the next morning, the voice on the other end drawled into Hannibal's ear. "Hannibaaaal, can I call you Hannibal? Aw, it doesn't matter. I believe you have some property of mine… I'd like it back if you'd be so kind."

Will, who was reading in the nearby window seat, looked up nervously.

“No,” Hannibal said shortly. “As I told your men, I’m willing to pay off the debts- the bill of sale and damages caused- but I’m not returning him to your so-called care.”

"Well now…" the man drawled out. "That won't be a small sum… that bitch caused one of our Handlers severe mental and physical damage when he tried to… assist... with the boy's anxiety…"

Will, who heard that part, growled softly, though not enough to be heard over the phone.

“Call me once you’ve gotten an itemized bill,” Hannibal snapped, his patience growing thin. “Otherwise, I see no point in continuing this conversation.”

"Now, Now…" the man said, "I didn't say we didn't have a price, I just said it would be high. Wouldn't want you promising something you can't deliver…"

Hannibal shook his head. “Go on.”

"Half a mil," the man said, "all up front."

“I assume this is already itemized and will be the final number?” Hannibal asked.

"Yes," the man said, though he didn't sound so happy about it.

“Very well,” Hannibal said. “I assume you’d like to meet in person to work out the details and transfer the money.”

"Of course," the man purred. "Where would you like to meet?"

Hannibal smiled to himself. “I’d love to have you for dinner.”

The man chuckled softly, "Alright, name the day."

“Friday?”

"Have the money ready then," he said. "Bye bye."

Hannibal hung up the phone, shaking his head. “Deplorable man.”

Will was still on the window seat, but he was gripping the book in his hands tightly, looking worried.

Hannibal turned to him. “We have work to do.”

Will looked up, nodding. "T-tell me what to do," he said softly.

The boss, Anthony Dimmond, came to dinner with his two bodyguards the next evening to… 'discuss terms'. Though, by the way the guards looked around, they were just as ready to grab Will and run as they were to deal.

Hannibal was inwardly glad he had asked Will to stay hidden in the library while this all happened. He'd be safe there.

The first course was the soup, and none of them seemed to notice anything. Once the salad was started, there was some confused shaking of heads and struggling to not fall asleep, but it wasn't until Hannibal brought out the fish that they seemed to get it.

"Wha...what did you do?" Dimmond growled softly, struggling to stay standing as he swayed slightly.

Hannibal smiled. “Whatever do you mean?”

Dimmond growled, snapping. The two bodyguards lumbered forward, grabbing for Hannibal. Hannibal sidestepped them easily, letting them trip over one another. The guards struggled, trying to get up again.

Hannibal stepped past them and moved to Dimmond. “I’m curious, Mr. Dimmond… who exactly takes over your business if something were to happen to you?”

Dimmond's eyes widened slightly, stumbling and falling before trying to crawl away quickly.

Hannibal bared his teeth in something that could never be mistaken for a smile. “Mr. Dimmond, we have things to discuss.”

One of the guards grabbed ahold of Hannibal's leg, trying to trip him. Hannibal snatched up one of the knives from the table and stabbed it deep into the neck of the guard holding his leg. Leaving it in the now gurgling man, Hannibal turned and snapped the neck of the other guard.

“Mr. Dimmond,” Hannibal said, turning to find where his prey had managed to crawl away to. A part of him worried about the extensive cleaning he’d need to do before letting Will into the dining room.

As if on cue, Will was suddenly in the doorway, looking around with wide eyes.

Hannibal’s eyes widened when he saw him. *It’s a good thing I took out the muscle first.* “Will,” he said, trying to keep his voice calm.

"B-boy…" Dimmond said quickly, reaching for Will as if expecting him to help him, "Boy, I took you in, didn't I? You had clothes and food… you-"

Will looked around before picking up a metal stag statuary near the door, struggling only slightly with the weight before turning back to Dimmond.

Hannibal’s eyes widened even more, but he made no move to stop Will.

"No…" Dimmond pleaded, almost whimpering, "No, don-"

Will dropped to his knees and brought the statue down on Dimmond's head, hard, then again and again.

“Will,” Hannibal said softly, moving closer.

Will looked up at Hannibal, hands and the statue dripping crimson, a smear from a large drop across his cheek.

Beautiful, Hannibal’s mind supplied. He took another step closer, holding his hand out for the statue.

Will looked down at the mess that was once Dimmond's head before lifting the statue slowly, his hands shaking as he handed it to Hannibal. Hannibal took it and carefully set it down, kneeling in front of Will to make certain he was alright. Will wouldn't meet Hannibal's eyes, shaking slightly in fear, even flinching as Hannibal touched his shoulder.

Hannibal’s hand moved up Will’s neck, thumb gently brushing at the blood smear there. “It’s alright, Will… it’s over,” he said softly.

Will looked up slowly, eyes wide.

“There,” Hannibal murmured.

"You… aren't… mad?" Will whimpered softly.

Hannibal shook his head. “You did well.”

Will let out a shaky breath. "I thought you- I…" He looked at his bloody hands. "I… killed an alpha…"

“He had it coming,” Hannibal murmured softly, wrapping one of his hands around both of Will’s.

"I… I've gone feral…" Will murmured, thinking of all the stories he'd heard since he was little. "They'll kill me for this…"

“They won’t touch you,” Hannibal snarled, his anger rising at the thought of losing Will.

Will shivered slightly at the snarl, slowly looking up at Hannibal's face again, his blue eyes wide and nervous. "I… I'm ok?"

“I don’t care,” Hannibal murmured, his fingers brushing back Will’s hair, “whatever the rest of the world thinks. You are perfect, to me.”

Will’s eyes managed to grow even wider. "You…" he said softly, "you don't c-care?"

“You’re perfect, Will,” Hannibal murmured again, “exactly the way you are.”

Will surprised them both, then. He began to purr. It was soft, but there. Omegan purrs were only something that happened when the omega felt truly safe, when they trusted those around them… or when around their chosen alpha… Hannibal smiled, leaning in to rest his forehead against Will’s shoulder to hear it more clearly. If anything, the purr got louder. Will leaned his head slightly against Hannibal's, sighing softly as he relaxed. He trusted Hannibal… he would be safe here.

Eventually, Hannibal pulled back, smiling contentedly. “Thank you, Will…”

Will blinked. "F-for what?"

“For running out in front of my car and into my life,” Hannibal said.

Will chuckled weakly. "You're welcome for denting your car, I guess."

Hannibal ran his thumb over Will’s cheek again, wanting to hold him there forever. “We have some cleaning to do,” he said, finally, pulling his hand away.

Will nodded, looking down at the bloody mess around him, sighing softly. "Yeah…"

Hannibal got to his feet, pulling Will up as well. “There are… two others in the dining room,” he admitted.

Will nodded. "Wh-where do we take them?"

“The basement,” Hannibal said, realizing too late that he was a little too quick with an answer.

“Have you… done this before…?” Will asked. He looked confused, but not scared, not frightened at all, just wondering.

Hannibal took a deep breath and nodded.

Will seemed to think for a minute before nodding. "Ok…"

“That’s… all you’re going to say?” Hannibal asked softly.

Will looked up at him. "Are you going to kill me?"

“Of course not.”

Will shrugged. "Then OK. I'm sure you have a reason for it… so I'm not going to worry about it."

Hannibal nodded slowly. “Ok.”

After they had cleaned up the bodies and the blood, finding the bill of sale in Dimmond's pocket- surprisingly not bloody- they scrubbed the floors, bleaching where it was needed.

When they finished Hannibal took Will's hand and led him upstairs and started a bath.

Will sighed softly, sitting on the toilet seat as his mind started to wander. The look in his father's eyes when he presented. When he sold Will, his last words to him, "An omega like you is best used as a meal ticket. You're no use to me otherwise." Dimmond's grin as he watched Will struggle to get free. The beatings he got when he had tried. Being starved. The attempted gentleing. Fighting back. Running. Getting hit by Hannibal. Then tonight, the rage he had felt before bringing that statue down. The feeling as he brought it down again and again. The-

"Will."

Will jumped, gasping softly at the hands on his shoulders, looking up, eyes wide.

Hannibal's hand moved to feel Will's forehead. "Are you alright, Will?"

Will took a shaky breath and nodded. "I-I'm ok… just…"

"It's a lot," Hannibal supplied. "You've been through a lot, and not just today." He slid his fingers soothingly through Will's hair. "I don't expect you to process it all at once… I'm here for you, Will. Whether you need to talk through it or just need a shoulder to lean on- figuratively or literally- I am here for you."

Will nodded, "I know…" After a moment's hesitation, he looked up at Hannibal. "Can… I ask you something?"

"Of course," Hannibal assured him.

Will looked down again. "M-my pa…"

"What of him?" Hannibal asked encouragingly.

Will looked down, fidgeting slightly. "I… I want-" He bit his lip, looking away.

“You want revenge,” Hannibal offered.

Will looked up, nodding slightly. "Y-yeah…"

“Then I will help you,” Hannibal said.

Will's eyes widened. "R-Really?"

“Of course,” Hannibal said.

Will sighed softly, resting his head on Hannibal's shoulder before scenting him slightly, letting Hannibal's rich alphaen scent help settle his nerves a little. Hannibal wrapped his arms carefully around Will to help ground him, letting out a soothing pur. Will sighed, relaxing against Hannibal, his own pur rumbling through him.

"Come," Hannibal said softly, "Let's get you cleaned up."

Will nodded slightly. "Alright…"

Healing a Heart

Things settled down for a while after that. Will excelled at Hannibal's tutoring, reading at higher levels and learning math and science, philosophy and other things Hannibal could teach. Soon enough, Will was beginning to learn Italian and French, though he knew some creole from growing up in Louisiana, he was learning it more fluently now. After a few months, Hannibal could smell the change coming, Will was approaching heat.

"Tell me, Will," Hannibal said softly, "have you ever taken a little white and blue pill before?"

Will blinked up at him. "You… mean suppressants?"

Hannibal nodded.

"They gave me some at the auction house…" Will said softly, "Why?"

“Have you ever… been through a heat before?” Hannibal asked gently.

Will was quiet for a moment. "My… my first one, yeah… but not since then…"

“Would you want to continue taking suppressants?” Hannibal asked.

Will looked up at him. "Do… you want me to?"

Hannibal shook his head. “That’s your decision, Will.”

Will sighed, looking down. "I… I guess…" he said softly.

Hannibal hesitated before reaching out to run his fingers through Will’s hair. “I’ll support you and help you, whatever you decide.”

Will sighed. "I… I can take them, if it'll help."

“It’s not about that, Will,” Hannibal said. “It’s about what you want.”

Will sighed softly. "I… I don't know…"

Hannibal nodded. “You have a couple days to decide, but likely not much more than that before your body will decide for you.”

Will looked up in surprise. "Y-you can-"

Hannibal shrugged apologetically. “I… am medically trained, Will. That was one of the things we covered, working in the er.”

Will nodded slowly, sighing. "I-I'll take the pills…" he said softly.

Hannibal nodded. “I’ll get them.”

The next day, Hannibal came home from work with a small prescription bag, handing Will some of the pills.

Will took the pills from Hannibal looking at them curiously. "They're a different color… the blue is darker…" he said softly.

“They probably used a knock-off brand,” Hannibal said, “less expensive.”

Will shrugged and took the pills.

Hannibal worked in the kitchen a few minutes before calling, "Will? Can you come help me with this?" Silence. "Will?" As he moved back to the den, he heard a strange noise. Coming in, he saw Will on the floor, shaking and choking as he tried to breathe.

Hannibal’s eyes widened as he raced for his medical kit. Having been a surgeon, and given his artistic activities, he had it well supplied. He brought the whole thing to Will’s side, pulling out an epipen as he knelt quickly beside Will. “Look at me, Will. I need you to try to focus.” He spoke to try and keep Will calm as he worked.

There must have been some ingredient in the name brand suppressants that Will was allergic to. Something that wasn’t in the knock-offs. *Focus on fixing it first,* Hannibal chided himself, *then figure it out.*

Will looked up at Hannibal, his eyes wide and panicked as his chest jerked, trying to get air.

“You’re going to be fine, Will,” Hannibal said, administering the epipen.

It took a moment, but finally, Will managed to gasp a deeper breath, shaking and whimpering softly. "Wh-what…"

“I think you have a medical allergy to something in the name brand suppressant,” Hannibal said softly. “I… I’m so sorry…”

Will shook his head weakly. "You couldn't have… known… and I sure… didn't…" he managed to pant out.

Hannibal brushed back Will's hair, sighing softly. “I could have killed you,” he murmured softly. “If I hadn’t come to check on you…”

Will tried to sit up, struggling slightly, but finally managing it. "Hannibal… you couldn't have known…"

Hannibal took a deep breath and nodded. “I suppose you’re right…”

Will sighed softly, leaning against Hannibal's shoulder slightly, trying to get the last of his breath back. Hannibal wrapped his arms around Will, purring softly. Then Hannibal did something he hadn’t done in all the time Will had been with him. He turned his head, his nose brushing against Will’s neck as he breathed in deeply, scenting Will.

Will gasped softly, gripping at Hannibal's shirt, eyes wide, a soft whine of want slipped out.

“I’m sorry, Will,” Hannibal murmured, though he didn’t pull away. “I… the thought of losing you…”

Will moaned softly, the feeling of Hannibal's warm breath on his neck making him shiver.

“I’ve… realized something…” Hannibal murmured. “There isn’t time to get the suppressants you aren’t allergic to. Even if I could have them tomorrow, they won’t have been in your system long enough to stop this heat cycle…”

Will struggled for a moment to find his voice; his thoughts had gone hazy after Hannibal scented him. "Wh-what can we do?"

Hannibal pulled himself away from Will, taking a shaky breath. “There are two options at this point,” he said, shaking his head. “I can let you handle it yourself, and stay somewhere else while you’re in heat.”

Will looked up, worried. "Don't leave me alone," he said quickly.

“Or… I can stay… and help you through it…”

Will’s eyes widened. "Y-you… would?"

Hannibal nodded slowly.

Will stood slowly, reaching out and taking Hannibal's sleeve, his eyes slowly moving up to meet Hannibal's, holding it for a long moment to make sure he had his attention, before tilting his head slightly, baring his neck to Hannibal once again.

Hannibal shivered. “Will,” he murmured, barely audible over his own heartbeat pounding in his ears. “Are… you sure you want this…? Are you sure you want… me?”

Will looked up at Hannibal again, his long lashes almost masking that brilliant blue. "Yes…" he whispered softly. "More than anything."

Hannibal gently cradled Will’s face with one hand, leaned in slowly, and gently kissed his lips. Will moaned softly, pressing closer to Hannibal, purring softly. Hannibal’s hand slid up to tangle in Will’s hair, moaning as he pressed closer, deepening the kiss. Will kissed back deeply until he had to pull back for air, gasping softly.

Hannibal smiled at Will, surprisingly also a bit out of breath. “I’m glad.”

Will smiled, looking up at Hannibal with those bright blue eyes. The hand in Will's curls tightened and tugged, making Will tilt his head back, Hannibal nosed gently along his now exposed throat, kissing gently along the way. Will whined softly, his hand moving up to Hannibal's hair, holding him to his neck as he moaned and sighed at the feelings.

"Perfect," Hannibal murmured. "You are perfect to me…" He shifted around til his teeth grazed over Will's scent gland.

Will’s breath caught in his throat slightly, his hand tightening on the alpha's hair. Hannibal's hand started sliding under Will’s shirt.

Will gasped. "W-wait-" He caught Hannibal's wrist before seeming to realize what he did and hid his face in Hannibal's shirt, a small whimper slipping out, sounding almost ashamed.

"It's alright, Will," Hannibal murmured into his dark curls, kissing the top of his head. "I can wait." After a moment or two of silence, he asked gently, "Tell me what you're thinking?"

"I… I have… s-scars…" Will said softly, not looking up.

"I'm aware," Hannibal said. "I helped you bathe after the incident with Dimmond … remember?"

"What if… you think I'm ugly…"

Hannibal couldn't help but chuckle. "I could never think that," he murmured. "Especially not because of scars."

Will shook his head slightly with a soft sigh. "B-but-"

Hannibal pulled back enough to put a hand under Will's chin to lift his face and meet his eyes. "May I show you something?"

Will nodded slightly, biting his lip in some combination of worry and anxiety.

Hannibal began undoing the buttons on his shirt. As it fell open, it revealed his chest and a great number of old scars. The more Hannibal uncovered, eventually dropping the shirt aside, the more scars there were; all across his chest, stomach, arms… He turned slowly to show Will his back, which was crisscrossed with more scars than could be counted. Finishing the turn, Hannibal faced Will again.

"Scars are nothing to be ashamed of," he said softly. "You need not love them, nor be grateful for what gave them, but a scar is proof that you have survived."

Will reached out, his hand shaking slightly as it touched Hannibal's chest, eyes wide. "Th-there's so many…"

"Most of them I got over one winter in my youth," Hannibal said, his voice soft to keep it from shaking. He had never liked talking about that winter, but he wanted to have no secrets with Will. If there was any person in the world he wanted to see him, all of him, and know him to his core, it was Will.

Will looked up, hearing the waver. He reached up, touching Hannibal's cheek gently, "If it's too much… you don't have to say it now…"

Hannibal smiled. “It was a long time ago. Even emotional scars can heal. I’m alright.” His hand covered Will’s, holding it in place as he turned his head to kiss his palm.

Will nodded slightly. "A-alright…" He pressed a bit closer, purring softly.

Hannibal told him everything, about the war, the deserter soldiers who killed his family, the orphanage, and finally being found by his uncle.

Will listened to the whole story before hugging Hannibal tightly. They had moved to the lounge at this point, cuddling on the couch together through the story. Hannibal pulled Will up onto his lap, nuzzling his nose into Will's curls gently.

"You're so strong…" Will whispered softly.

Hannibal shook his head.

Will looked up at him. "You're strong to me…"

Hannibal smiled sadly. "Thank you, Will… It's taken a long time to get where I am. For years afterwards, I couldn't even speak of it without crying."

Will pressed closer, tucking his head under Hannibal's chin. "I… know I can't fill that hole… but… I'll do my best, if you want…"

"You have carved out your own space in my heart," Hannibal said softly.

"And you've taken mine," Will said, just as softly.

Hannibal purred softly. Not that he felt Will needed comfort, but he was genuinely content.

Will snuggled closer, his eyes slipped closed, just enjoying the warm comfort of his chosen alpha.

Will woke the next morning, feeling dizzy and hot. He ached all over, but most of all, he felt empty, desperately empty. He whined loudly, this wasn't at all like it was before… this was-

"A-alpha!" he cried, shaking as he gripped at his pillow.

The door opened slowly. "May I come in?" Hannibal asked when it was only a crack. He could smell that Will was properly in heat now, but he still felt the need to get consent. He hadn't actually bonded Will, yet, even though they had both agreed to it.

Will whined softly, the sound pulling at Hannibal's heart. "Please… Please Hannibal…"

Hannibal entered, holding a tray filled with water bottles and snacks- fruit and crackers and nuts, things that would work to keep them going without spoiling. He set it on the bedside table and moved closer to check on Will. "It's early," he said softly, feeling Will's forehead.

Will whined softly, leaning into Hannibal's touch. "W-worse than… b-before… why is-" He cut off with another sharp whine, gripping at the sheets tightly and shaking.

"It's alright, Will," Hannibal murmured, letting out a gentle pur to help him calm down. He realized Will hadn't made a nest yet. He didn't mind, but he knew how much something like

that could weigh on an omega. "I'm here. We're going to get through this together, yes? You've been on suppressants for a while now. The first heat after suppressants is always difficult."

Will nodded slightly, reaching for Hannibal. "Please…" he didn't really know what he was asking for, but the words came anyways, "P-please, Hannibal…"

Hannibal quickly stripped off his shirt and moved onto the bed, covering Will with his own body. The weight and skin contact immediately helped Will relax, though he still whimpered and twitched with need.

"I'm going to take care of you, Will," Hannibal murmured, still purring. He kissed Will tenderly, his hands roaming along his back, one hand dipping below the waistband of the pajama pants Will still had on.

Will moaned softly, pressing closer to him. "Hannibal…"

Hannibal kissed along Will's jaw, his fingers finding Will's hole and slipping inside easily; it was already dilated and spilling slick. He took an unsteady breath, trying to keep his head clear.

Will mewled softly, his eyes slipping closed as he clenched slightly around the intruding fingers.

"I've got you, Will," Hannibal murmured, teeth grazing over the shell of Will's ear. "I've got you."

Will moaned softly, already feeling a bit better. Hannibal’s fingers were much longer than his. It felt amazing.

"I'm going to simulate a knot," Hannibal murmured. "It will give you a brief reprieve. I need to clear my schedule…" He was talking too much, he realized, but a part of him was worried if he didn't say it aloud he might forget.

Will nodded slightly, panting softly. Hannibal crooked his fingers, brushing along the bundle of nerves.

Will jerked, moaning loudly. "Hannibal!" He gripped at the sheets tightly as he writhed.

"Good," Hannibal purred. "So good…" He stroked over it again.

Will moaned loudly, gasping as his hips lifted wanting more.

Hannibal crooked his fingers, spreading them to stimulate as much of Will's hole as possible as he pulled back, catching on the rim, similar to how a knot would lock inside.

Will arched sharply, keening as he came.

"Good," Hannibal murmured, "very good."

Will’s body relaxed back onto the bed, his bones seemingly turned to jelly as his mind seemed to calm. He looked up at Hannibal with half lidded eyes.

Hannibal carefully pulled his fingers out and wiped them on the bed sheet. He wanted to taste it, but there was time for that later. Truth be told, he wasn't certain he could leave and do what he needed to if he gave in to that temptation. "I have to make a few phone calls," Hannibal said gently. "While I'm gone, I want you to drink some water and make yourself comfortable. Alright?"

Will nodded slightly, a soft purr in his chest. As Hannibal turned to go, he heard a soft whine behind him. Looking back, he saw Will looking around the room.

"N-nest?" Will asked, still softly.

Hannibal smiled gently. "If you want one, then make one, dearest. You know where the soft blankets are by now." He glanced at his shirt still on the floor. "If you want some things with my scent, you can fetch them from my room as well. You should have some time before the next wave hits, but I'll be back before then."

Will nodded, wobbling to his feet and moving towards the linen closet.

Hannibal smiled and moved off to make arrangements. He let his patients know that he would have to put a hold on all appointments until further notice. Yes, he would be back. No, he would not charge them any kind of cancelling or rescheduling fees. He shook his head after the last one. Honestly, do they really think I would charge them for my personal time conflicts? Lastly, he left a message with the secretary at the building Jack Crawford worked in, leaving a message to inform him that he would be unavailable for two weeks. That would give them more than enough time, even if he did end up going into rut part way through Will's heat.

That done, he double checked the locks on the doors and windows before returning to Will's room. He knocked softly.

"Y-yeah?" Will called back.

"May I come in?" Hannibal asked patiently.

"Yes please," Will said softly.

Hannibal entered, closing the door behind him, eyes drawn to the bed. Will had built a large nest, blankets and pillows and a few of Hannibal's shirts. The sight made the man himself swell slightly in pride as the fact that Will really wanted him cemented itself in Hannibal's mind.

Will fidgeted, settling more into the nest. Hannibal couldn’t help but notice that he’d finished stripping off his clothes. "Is… it good?" he asked softly.

"It's perfect," Hannibal said, moving over to the bed. "Did you drink some water, too?"

Will nodded holding up a half empty bottle.

Hannibal smiled. “Good boy.”

Will smiled, preening at the praise.

“Let’s eat a little before we get distracted,” Hannibal suggested. “Do you want to eat in your nest?”

Will looked around him at the warm soft nest before nodding slightly. Hannibal quickly stripped out of the last of his clothes and climbed into the nest with Will. Reaching over, he grabbed a bowl of grapes from the tray.

Will purred softly, pressing against Hannibal's chest as he crawled into his lap.

"Good boy," Hannibal murmured, pressing a grape to Will's lips. He had prepared the grapes before, so he wouldn't need to worry about stems while they had better things to think about.

Will ate the grape, happily nestled against Hannibal's chest.

After eating for a bit, Will started to squirm slightly, his breath coming in soft pants. Hannibal set the bowl aside.

Will looked up at him, those big blue eyes feverishly bright. Hannibal cradled his cheek and kissed him deeply. Will moaned softly, kissing back happily. After kissing for a while, Will squirmed slightly, blushing when he realized he was leaking slick into Hannibal's lap.

Hannibal hummed happily. “I think you’re ready for me,” he murmured, his hand sliding down Will’s back.

Will arched at the touch, moaning softly.

“How do you want it?” Hannibal asked, his fingers running back up along his spine.

Will shivered. "I-I don't-" He whimpered softly. "I've never-"

"It's alright," Hannibal said soothingly. "We can try it a few different ways and find what you like." He kissed him gently. "Lay down, love."

Will nodded, laying down quickly, but looking nervous.

"Don't worry, Will," Hannibal murmured. "I'll take care of you."

Will nodded, wiggling slightly, a soft whine slipping out at the loss of Hannibal's warmth. Hannibal settled between Will’s legs, lifting them up to his shoulders. Will watched, eyes wide, his heart about to beat out of his chest. He whined softly.

Hannibal lined up and pushed in slowly. Dilated and slicked as Will was by his heat, it was their first time, and he wanted Will to enjoy it.

Will gasped softly as Hannibal entered, eyes widening at this new sensation. This was nothing like the fingers. Hannibal began moving slowly in and out, moving faster as Will

grew more used to the stretch.

Will began moaning softly as he moved, his breath coming a bit quicker as he shivered and gripped at his nest. "Oh, Hannibal…"

“Yes,” Hannibal moaned, letting himself enjoy it. The sight of Will, flushed under him, the feel of him, and, oh, the sounds he made; he wanted it all. He wanted more.

Will gasped softly as Hannibal picked up speed, his little moans and whines getting louder as he writhed under his alpha. It was so good! But he needed more… He needed deeper…

He whined softly, "Alpha…"

“Tell me what you need,” Hannibal murmured, not letting command into his tone.

"Deep- d-deeper…" Will moaned, releasing the blankets and reaching for Hannibal. "Please…"

Hannibal leaned forward, so Will could reach him, and changed the angle so he could thrust deeper. Will cried out as Hannibal hit something that sent sparks through him and left him trembling, eyes wide as he gripped Hannibal's shoulders tightly. Hannibal thrust into it, over and over, feeling his knot swelling and brushing Will’s hole with every thrust.

Will keened, his fingernails leaving small red crescents in Hannibal's shoulders as he shook. "Pleeease," he whined desperately.

In another three thrusts, Hannibal’s knot slid in, locking them together as he came.

Will came with a cry, arching up against Hannibal's chest as he shook through his orgasm, clinging to his alpha tightly. He must have fainted for a moment because when he opened his eyes again, they had rolled. He was laying on Hannibal's warm chest, still locked together, the soft alphaen purr under his ear making him purr in return.

After a few minutes of relaxing, Hannibal’s knot deflated enough for Will to climb off. He stopped on hands and knees, arching his back slightly, feeling like this was… right...

Hannibal let out an eager growl, coming up behind him and kissing along his spine. Will shivered, moaning softly, slick running down his legs as he spread them a bit further to give Hannibal room.

"Good boy," Hannibal murmured, lining up and sliding inside again. He let out a moan and nuzzled his nose against Will's scent gland.

Will moaned loudly, gripping the blankets as he tilted his head, giving Hannibal more room and purring softly at the attention.

"My good boy," Hannibal murmured, starting up a slow rhythm.

Will moaned, "Alpha… so good…"

"So good for me," Hannibal murmured.

Will moaned, gripping the blankets. "M-more… please…"

"Yes," Hannibal agreed, speeding up, thrusting deeper and deeper.

Will was gasping softly, pressing back against Hannibal with each thrust. Hannibal moaned, his hands tightening on Will's hips, pushing even harder, deeper, faster.

Will cried out as Hannibal hit that perfect spot. "Hannibal…" he moaned, baring his neck quickly, "Alpha… please…"

Hannibal laid forward, scenting him as he kept thrusting. Will whined softly, wanting more. First tongue then teeth dragged across the spot, tasting it, teasing it as they both drew closer to the edge.

"Alpha…" Will managed softly. "Mark me… please…"

Hannibal's teeth sank into Will, tasting the familiar tang of fresh blood mixed with the heavy smell of Will. His knot swelled again, pushing into Will as he bit deeper, wanting to leave a mark that would last.

Will almost howled, cumming suddenly as the bond formed, his hole tightening around Hannibal's knot, milking everything it could from the alpha. Hannibal shuddered, letting out a long, low moan as his teeth sank even deeper.

Will moaned softly, purring in delight as he felt the bite get stronger. "Yours…" he murmured.

Hannibal pulled back, licking the bite gently. "Mine," he said and kissed the mark. He held his wrist out for Will.

Will shivered, his instincts screaming for him to bite hard, bite now! "M-mine?" Will asked softly, his lips ghosting along Hannibal's wrist.

"Yours," Hannibal agreed.

Will managed a low whine before sinking his teeth deep into the scent gland. ***Mine!***

Hannibal let out a low growling pur that seemed to rumble the whole bed. Will released the bite, licking at the wound gently as he purred. A scent came to Will then, strong and intoxicating. He shivered and moaned softly as the rumbling, growling pur behind him seemed to grow even louder.

Rut... Will realized, *My alpha's rut*... Then his mind went blank.

When Will finally came back to himself, the window was dark behind the drawn curtains and the light in the room was turned on. Will shifted and moaned softly; his body ached. He looked down, surprised by the bruises and bites covering him. He didn't remember much

beyond Hannibal holding him and feeling so very loved. Will looked around. He was alone in the room.

"Hannibal…?" he called, wondering what had happened.

Just then, the door was opened and in came Hannibal with a tray of food. His smile fell away when he saw Will was awake, looking afraid and alone in his nest.

"Will," Hannibal said, crossing the room quickly and setting down the tray. "It's alright, I'm here." He climbed onto the bed again, fingers running soothingly through Will's hair. "We needed to eat…"

Will nodded slightly, he pressed forward into Hannibal's touch, sighing softly, "What time is it?" He asked, looking at the darkened window.

"Almost ten pm… on Thursday," Hannibal said somewhat sheepishly.

“That’s… I went into heat three days ago!” Will exclaimed.

“You did.”

Will looked down at himself again. "I… the last thing I remember was…" His eyes moved to Hannibal's now bandaged wrist; a quick check told him his neck was bandaged, too.

Hannibal looked worried. He hadn't taken care of Will, had let them both go for days without proper food or drink… They had had the snacks he'd prepared that first day, a bit at a time when he had been present enough to remember it…

"I'm sorry, Will," Hannibal said softly.

Will shook his head. "It's alright, you went into rut, right? We couldn't have changed that."

Hannibal reached over, taking a water bottle from the tray. "No, I suppose not…" He opened it and offered it to Will. "And wishing I had been prepared beforehand is a pointless endeavor now. All I can do is try to make up for it."

Will took the water, taking a sip before smiling softly. "Well… I think… it was nice," he gestured to his exposed chest and the bites and bruises there. "I seemed to like it anyways."

Hannibal sighed softly, his hand running over the marks he’d left on the canvas of Will’s skin. “You wouldn’t have said if you didn’t,” he said softly. “I’m not certain I would have heard it, even if you had.”

"Do you… regret doing it?" Will asked softly.

Hannibal shook his head. “Biology is a funny thing. It can make us do things we never thought we would. No, I don’t regret it, but I don’t like losing control of myself. Does… that make sense?”

Will nodded. "I understand… I wish I could remember…"

“We’ll make plenty of memories together,” Hannibal said.

Will smiled, nodding slightly. "Yeah…" he leaned against Hannibal's side, sighing softly, "Thank you… Hannibal."

"I heard you had found yourself a mate, Hannibal!" one of the doctors in the monthly meeting said, smiling at him.

Chilton sighed softly, "Lucky…"

The first doctor to speak looked at Chilton in surprise. "I thought you had found one, too. you were bragging about it last time."

Chilton sighed. "The deal fell through. The auction house is in complete anarchy right now with the owner missing… and the omega I was purchasing has vanished as well… Shame. He was a pretty little thing. Bluest eyes you've ever seen and the cutest curls."

“I won't apologize for stabbing him,” Will’s voice seemed to echo in Hannibal’s mind, *“he was trying to put a Submission collar on me. I won't be scruffed. Not by them.”*

They were preparing him for sale, Hannibal realized. *For sale to Chilton.*

Hannibal had to take several deep breaths before he could speak calmly. "I find the auction rather distasteful. They care very little for the omegas in their care, only the price tag they can tack on. I would suggest courting, Doctor Chilton, but it seems you know that wouldn't pan out for you." His voice was even throughout, and the other doctors in the room took it for humor, which was just fine for him. Chilton didn't, however, and their eyes locked on one another. Hannibal smiled ever so slightly, but he couldn't seem to melt the ice in his eyes, and it seemed Chilton could see it.

Chilton frowned slightly, confused by Hannibal's coldness, but then the other doctor spoke again. "So, when do we get to meet your mate, Hannibal? I am so curious to see who managed to catch your interest."

“He is a bit shy, yet,” Hannibal said, turning his attention away from Chilton. “It may take some time until he’s ready to mingle.”

"Then how do we know they even exist?" Chilton asked, seeming ready to argue with Hannibal, even though they both knew who the stronger alpha was.

Hannibal turned his cold smile on Chilton again. “Unlike some people, I do not see my relationship status as a part of some social ranking, and thus do not need others to know it. Believe whatever you like, Doctor Chilton. I’m quite happy to keep my personal life personal.”

Chilton’s eyes widened slightly, his instincts warring with his pride before he huffed softly and turned away, grabbing a drink from a passing tray and moving off to another group.

"Took the wind right out of his sails," the other doctor chuckled, turning back to Hannibal. "Congratulations on your mating. I would love to meet him if he's ever willing. But do give him my best. Having captured your heart, he has to be pretty extraordinary."

Hannibal smiled, nodding slightly. “He truly is. Thank you.”

Once the party was over, Hannibal came home late in the evening to find the den lights on. Will was curled on the couch, fast asleep with his book opened next to him. He must have been waiting up for Hannibal. Hannibal shook his head, smiling to himself as he carefully scooped his mate up. Will moaned softly, curling closer to Hannibal's chest and smiling in his sleep. Hannibal carried him up to bed, laying him down gently before getting ready for bed himself.

"Hannibal!" Will called cheerfully as he came down the stairs, clutching the leather bound book tightly to his chest. He had been looking for it for the last fifteen minutes, and must have missed the doorbell ringing. "I found the boo-" He skidded to a halt on the landing, eyes wide when he took in the larger dark skinned man talking to Hannibal. Will was ready to run back up the stairs and hide from the strange alpha when Hannibal smiled at him.

"Ah, Will, come here. This is Agent Crawford. I told you about him before, remember? Jack, this is Will Graham."

Will moved forward, pressing against Hannibal's side as he looked up at the other man. "H-hello…"

Jack nodded to Will before turning his confused expression to Hannibal. “I thought you said it wasn’t-”

“Yes, well,” Hannibal said, shaking his head and wrapping one arm around Will. “Sometimes things change in ways you do not expect. Sometimes the things you think will never happen do.”

Jack chuckled. "Love can do that." He smiled at Will. "Nice to meet you." He held out his hand but Will pressed closer to Hannibal, eyes wide.

"It's alright, Will," Hannibal murmured. "He's a bit shy," he said to Jack.

Will gripped at Hannibal's jacket behind his back, where Jack couldn't see, and reached out tentatively to shake his hand.

Jack shook it gently. As gruff as the other alpha could be, he seemed to share a similar outlook on omegas as Hannibal. "I'm sorry for startling you," he said, his voice more mild than Hannibal had ever heard it.

Will shook his head slightly. "It's alright… I'm just… not used to people yet." Then, realizing he had dropped the book when Jack had offered his hand, Will scrambled to pick up the old leather book, looking it over quickly for damage.

Hannibal smiled fondly as he watched Will. He had come so far… "Would you like to come in, Jack?" he said. "Or did you just want me to look at another file?"

Jack shrugged. "Maybe for a bit, I need to get back to Bella before it's late. I just wanted to check on you. Your sudden 'emergency leave' confused a lot of people." He smiled at Will gently. "Though I can see why, now."

Hannibal smiled and moved back to allow Jack to come in.

Will moved with Hannibal, his eyes still watching the other alpha before they all moved to the den. He put the book on the table by Hannibal's chair, then he curled in the window seat, which had become his favorite place, watching them.

Hannibal got them all cups of coffee, placing a tray on the table of milk, cream, and sugar. He and Jack discussed work, how the others on Jack's team were doing with the latest case. Jack tiptoed around the details, not wanting to upset Will. Hannibal looked over the folder, asking questions openly, knowing Will was not so fragile as Jack thought.

They continued like that for a bit, before Hannibal caught Will sneaking the sugar cubs to snack on.

"Are you hungry, Will?" Hannibal asked softly.

Will flushed, nodding slightly.

"Oh!" Jack looked at his watch. "I should be going. Thank you for your time, Dr. Lecter."

Will watched the alphas share farewells, still sitting on the window seat. "Sorry…" he said softly, when Hannibal had shown Jack out. "They were really sweet…"

Hannibal smiled. "It's alright. Let's go get some food." He hesitated a little before adding, "You can have some after we eat, if you'd like. Or I can make us a dessert."

Will smiled happily, nodding quickly. "Ok."

They had lunch together before Hannibal made Will some baked apples covered in cinnamon sugar, smiling at Will's moans as he ate the sticky treat.

"So good!"

Hannibal chuckled softly. "I'm glad you like it, Will."

Will smiled, wiggling in his seat as he ate more. Hannibal leaned closer, licking a bit of sugar from the corner of Will's mouth.

Will beamed at him, blushing cutely. "Will it ruin your reputation if people knew how amazing you are to me?"

"On the one hand," Hannibal said, chuckling, "I wouldn't mind the reputation of being good to my mate. On the other, few would believe you."

Will hummed happily, snuggling against Hannibal's side. "Your mate," he said happily.

"Mine," Hannibal purred in agreement.

Will snuggled closer, purring softly, soon, he looked up at Hannibal.

Hannibal took a moment to admire his mate. Will was wearing dark gray slacks, the fit cut close to his legs. the black belt and a waistcoat the same color as the pants covered his middle. The navy blue of his shirt pulled out the color of his eyes and enhanced the paleness of his skin. It took everything within him to stop Hannibal from pressing Will against the wall, burying his nose in the length of his neck to scent him. His omega was absolutely stunning.

Will cocked his head slightly. "Hannibal? You still in there?"

Hannibal smiled slightly. "Sorry, I was daydreaming."

Will smiled. "Good daydream?"

“It was, yes.”

"Hmm" Will said softly, "Should I not have woke you then?"

"Reality is better," Hannibal said, moving over to give Will a brief kiss.

Will giggled softly, snuggling against Hannibal. "I'm glad you think so."

Old Debts Repaid

Beaux Graham knocked back another drink, grinning widely. He had finally gotten rid of his bitch son, plus he would soon receive the money from his sale, which was a lot, from what the auction house owner had said when they talked last. He was looking at quite the windfall, which he had bragged about to Jen, his favorite barkeep, who had simply rolled her eyes and said he'd better pay his tab then. The regulars had told him he'd better buy them all a round when he 'hit the big time', and Beaux had waved them off with a grunt.

A full glass of whiskey was placed on the bar in front of him. He blinked and looked up at Jen. "I knew you cared, sweetheart," he drawled at the young beta.

She scoffed softly. "Wasn't me, Graham," she said, nodding to the opposite side of the bar.

Beaux squinted curiously across the smoke hazed bar. On the opposite side of the bar, in the corner, a young man leaned against the bar. His back was to Beaux, but he had brunette hair hanging around his ears. He couldn't see the man too well, between the drinks he'd had and the cigarette smoke filling the air, but he wouldn't turn down free booze. He drank, eyes widening when the taste that hit his tongue was the top shelf stuff and not his usual cheap shit.

"Don't push it, Graham." Jen sighed. "You've already had a lot today."

Beaux waved her off, deciding to nurse this drink instead of chugging. "Yeah, yeah…"

Jen shook her head, muttering about him being an old fool before moving off to serve others.

Beaux left the bar an hour or so later, feeling much more drunk than usual after at least three glasses of the top shelf. He staggered down the street towards home before leaning on a nearby wall. "Shit… stuffs strong…"

Before he could do much more, a hand took his arm and pulled it over strong shoulders. "You should be more careful what you drink, Mr. Graham," the man said in a deep accented voice.

Beaux looked at the man blearily, but couldn't make out much. His eyesight was fading, but just as he was passing out, there was a flash of bright blue eyes and dark curls.

Beaux woke with a groan. His head was pounding and his mouth felt like it was full of cotton. He sat up, realizing he was in his chair at home, but when he tried to get up, he found himself tied down. Blinking in confusion, he looked around. "What the hell-?"

"You shouldn't move too much," the low accented voice from before spoke from somewhere behind him.

Beaux jerked, trying to twist out of the ropes, snarling slightly, though it wasn't very threatening. He could smell the other man's scent now. He knew who was the stronger alpha here, and it wasn't him. "The fuck do you want?" he demanded.

The other alpha laughed softly at the weak display. "You had a lot to drink. You should be more careful. How can a man like you trust drinks from a stranger so easily? I mean, sure, it's free, but you're coming into some money soon… though, I hear, you've been saying that for months."

Beaux growled again softly. "What's it to you how I spend my time?"

"Honestly, I could care less if you drank yourself into oblivion," the alpha said, his voice creeping toward a snarl.

"Then why don't you get out and let me get back to it, huh?" Beaux snapped.

“Because you’ve hurt one who is dear to me,” the alpha growled, all friendliness gone.

"I haven't hurt nobody." Beaux growled.

The answering snarl was so fierce, Beaux couldn’t help but duck his head.

"Hello, 'pa'," a voice said from the dark corner in front of Beaux. Out of the dark shadows, stepped…

"...Will?" Beaux asked, eyes wide.

Will smiled coldly at him. "Didn't forget about me already, then?"

Beaux couldn’t find words, he just stared.

Will sighed softly. "Well, it won't matter anyways." He smiled sweetly. "Those ropes are specially made, if they catch fire, they burn completely and leave no traces behind… given the right prodding… people will think you fell asleep with a cigarette lit… again…" Will moved forward and tipped a bottle of vodka over, spilling it on and around The bound alpha, then on the floor around him before lighting a cigarette and placing it in his father's fingers. "Enjoy… Pa…"

The alpha moved then, circling around Beaux to stand beside that… "Damn bitch," he growled, struggling against the ropes. "How dare you? You feral little fuck!"

The tall alpha's lips curled back, but Beaux's vision swam too much to tell if it was a smile or a snarl.

"You-you can't do this," Beaux tried, realizing the cigarette was burning down quickly. "You can't just-"

"You may not believe you'll burn in Hell," the tall alpha said softly, "but you will certainly burn here."

Will pressed against the large alpha’s side. "I suppose a small thank you is needed… If you hadn't tried to sell me off like that… I'd never have met my mate…"

The taller alpha turned his head, kissing Will's dark curls affectionately.

"Thank me by not doing this," Beaux pleaded. The ash had begun to droop on the end of the cigarette, and he was trying to hold as still as possible to keep it from dropping and possibly igniting the alcohol, but he trembled with fear. "Son, p-please…"

Will looked at the shaking alpha, tilting his head slightly. "I'm your son now? I thought my only use to you was a meal ticket…"

The taller alpha let out a snarl that chilled Beaux to his bones. He was going to die. He was going to burn, and there was nothing he could do about it. He whimpered softly and dropped the cigarette.

Will watched as the vodka ignited, covering the man he had called 'pa'. He leaned closer to Hannibal. "We should go… before the whole trailer goes up…"

Hannibal was watching the flames and the pathetic excuse of a man screaming and writhing in pain. The fire seemed to dance in his eyes. "Yes, of course," he said, finally looking away. He kissed Will's forehead and pulled him out into the night.

Will followed, looking back once or twice to see the flames begin to lick at the old building. He looked up at Hannibal, smiling gently. "Should we call it in? There's a payphone just up the road…"

Hannibal shook his head. "We need to be a long way off. Someone will see it before too long."

Will nodded, following Hannibal to where the Bentley was hidden. Once they had driven home again, Will climbed onto his window seat and sighed. Hannibal moved over to him, running his fingers through Will’s hair.

Will hummed, leaning into the hand. "Thank you… I know it wasn't your usual type of…"

"Style?" Hannibal provided smoothly. "Perhaps not, but I am glad to have done it."

Will nodded slightly. "I… thought part of me would feel bad… he was my pa… he did raise me… but… I don't…"

Hannibal nodded. “Some people deserve the fates they bring on themselves.”

Will looked at Hannibal again. "And… you’re ok? Having a feral bitch as a mate?"

Hannibal shook his head. “I’m beyond content having *you* as my mate.”

Will smiled, standing and kissing Hannibal. "I'm glad…"

A soft knock at the door made Will blink. He looked toward the door in surprise.

Hannibal picked up his phone from where he had left it on the front door table, to see if he had missed any calls. He had left it in case anyone tried to track his whereabouts tonight with it.

Will moved over and opened the door.

"Oh! Hello," the young woman said, smiling at Will, she had long, dark brown hair and gray blue eyes, she smelled neutral, a beta, "Is Hannibal ho-"

Will turned and hurried away from the door, hugging Hannibal's arm tightly and watching the woman from behind his alpha.

"It's alright, Will," Hannibal said softly. "Hello, Alana." He said pleasantly, moving forward slightly."I must apologize for Will, he isn't used to being around other people yet. Will, this is Alana Bloom, a colleague of mine."

Will looked up at Hannibal who nodded encouragement. "H-How do you do?" Will asked softly.

Hannibal smiled in approval.

Alana was also smiling. "I'm well, thank you." She looked up at Hannibal. "I'm sorry if I'm interrupting."

Hannibal shook his head. "Not at all, we were just retiring for a nightcap." He stepped back, holding the door open. “Would you like to come in?”

Alana smiled. "If that's alright…"

Will was still hiding behind Hannibal, not trusting this woman.

"Of course." Hannibal smiled.

Alana entered, smiling encouragingly at Will, who ducked behind Hannibal again.

After closing the door, Hannibal led the way to the sitting room, discreetly checking his phone for missed calls. Seeing none that would account for Alana's unexpected visit, he set it down and poured the three of them drinks.

Alana smiled, accepting hers. "Thank you."

Will moved to his window seat, taking his drink from Hannibal with a soft smile. "Thanks."

Hannibal gave them both a smile and a nod, moving to his own chair and motioning Alana to sit as well. “So, what brings you to our ‘neck of the woods’, Alana?” he asked conversationally.

Alana sat and arranged herself before speaking. "I was visiting a client nearby and thought I'd drop in, seeing as you're usually having a drink around now."

Hannibal smiled. “Old habits die hard, as they say.”

Alana nodded, smiling, she saw the leather bound book that Will had brought down when Jack was there. "The Odyssey?" she asked softly. "Interesting reading material."

Hannibal’s usual stiff smile softened at the memory, looking down into his glass. “Will enjoyed the Iliad, so of course we had to read the next part, as well.”

Alana smiled. "You're reading together?"

Will looked down into his wine. "I don't… read that well yet…" he mumbled.

“You’re getting better,” Hannibal said, looking up from his drink.

Will smiled, blushing slightly. He always liked Hannibal's praise, however simple it was.

Alana watched them for a moment. "Where are you from, Will?" she asked. "You have a bit of an accent in there I can't quite place."

"Louisiana," Will said softly. "My p-pa… he moved with the work…"

Hannibal’s jaw tightened slightly, but he didn’t interject.

Alana's eyes flicked to Hannibal, noting the tightness in his jaw before looking at Will again. "How did you two meet?"

Will curled further into the window seat, not saying more.

“Alana,” Hannibal said softly, frowning slightly, “I’ve never known you to be the type to pry.”

Alana flushed slightly. "I've always been curious, Hannibal. I like to understand things."

Hannibal sighed, looking into his cup again. “You’ve known me a long time, now, Alana…”

Alana nodded. "Yes, I have, and I've never known you to be impulsive."

Hannibal opened his mouth, but he didn’t get anything out before Will stood sharply, his wine glass forgotten on the windowsill.

"I'm an auction omega, alright?" he snapped. "I was sold by my pa and Hannibal saved me. That tell you everything you want? Or do you need my blood type, too? Maybe a description of Hannibal in bed? You obviously like him!"

"Will," Hannibal said softly, not angry, but chiding. Will knew better than to act like this.

Will was still a long moment before turning and running up the stairs, the bedroom door slamming behind him.

Hannibal winced slightly. Alana was blushing, but she remained quiet.

“You know my stances on omegas,” Hannibal said softly, “so I hope that you’ll take them into account. I don’t condone the auctions. I despise them, in fact. Will had escaped and run out in front of my car. I brought him home with a sprained ankle. He was so… fragile. And then I learned what he’d been running from. I couldn’t let him go back to that, so I paid off

his debts, intending to teach him what he needed to know to survive in this world. As it turned out, we were rather compatible, and he chose to stay with me." He looked down into his wine. "Is that enough for Agent Crawford's analysis, Alana? Or did you have something else you wanted to ask?"

Alana's eyes widened slightly. "How did-"

Hannibal shook his head, setting his wine aside. "I know you recommended me to him as a consultant. It's obvious he trusts your opinion. It wasn't a great leap to make."

Alana looked down at her own glass, looking ashamed. "I… am sorry… Hannibal," she said softly. "I do know your stance. I didn't know what to think when Jack approached me about this. I… I had to see for myself…"

Hannibal nodded. "I understand. I wish you had been up front with me, but I do understand." He glanced over to the window seat and sighed again. "I'll clear things up with Will…" *He's more perceptive than I gave him credit for.*

Alana nodded and stood. "I should probably go. He's upset enough, I doubt my hanging around will help."

Hannibal nodded thoughtfully. "Drive safely, Alana."

"Perhaps, apologize for me," she said, nodding, "when he calms down."

Hannibal stood to walk her out. "I will. I told him you were a friend, and this doesn't change that." Once she was gone and the wine glasses moved to the sink, he moved upstairs to the bedroom and knocked gently. "Will?"

Silence.

When Hannibal opened the bedroom door, the scent made him pause in surprise. It was strong and very much Will, almost as if Will had rubbed his scent onto anything and everything on his way to the bed, where he now lay, back to the door.

Marking his territory… Hannibal's brain supplied.

Hannibal closed the door quietly, and moved over to the bed. "May I join you, Will?"

Will didn't answer, but he curled up further, moving his legs so Hannibal had room if he wanted.

Hannibal sat on the bed, running his hand along Will's arm. "I admit, that didn't go as I had expected… Alana checking in at Jack's behest was a surprise."

Will made a noncommittal noise, curling up even more. Hannibal reached over, running his fingers through Will's curls gently, knowing that always settled him. Will whined softly, trying to curl away from the touch. He wanted to stay angry. He wanted…

"Talk to me?" Hannibal asked softly. "Tell me what's wrong?"

Will sighed softly. "She shows up with her… questions and her big eyes… You're not hers…"

“No, I am not,” Hannibal agreed. “I am yours, Will.”

Will growled softly, though it could have also been a fierce purr. "It's our home… she just… invaded!"

“I invited her in,” Hannibal reminded him.

"She had no right to come in here and make bedroom eyes at you like that."

“I understand your frustration,” Hannibal said, “but she is just a colleague.” He explained that Jack had sent her to assess Will’s situation, and that whatever had happened between himself and Alana was a long time ago. He ended by reminding Will that she was gone, now, and that Will was still here. “This is math you can do. I want you, Will. No one else.”

Will finally moved, quick as a wink, he was curled in Hannibal's lap, pressing close. "I'm sorry… I just… I didn't like it… her questions…"

“Nor did I,” Hannibal confided. “I told her as much. She did apologize. I think she realized that she went about this all the wrong way. It won’t happen again. Not from her, at least.”

Will nodded slightly, sniffling. "I… I just want to forget about the auction house… I just want to be with you…"

Hannibal nodded, pulling Will closer and purring softly. “I know, Will. I know. It may be hard to believe, but Agent Crawford wouldn't have sent Alana to check the nature of our relationship if he didn't care. So, in his own, misguided way, I think he must care about you and your wellbeing.”

Will pressed closer, rubbing against Hannibal, marking him more with his scent again.

Hannibal chuckled softly, nuzzling against Will.

"I'm sorry…" Will said softly.

"Whatever for?" Hannibal asked.

"For… making Agent Crawford think badly of you…" he said softly. He wished he wasn't still so scared and mistrustful of others… He didn't want to be but…

Hannibal laughed softly. "That's alright, my dear. We haven't worked together long, so he doesn't know me very well. Not to mention, he's involved in behavioral analysis, which makes him suspicious of everyone. No, love, I dare say it's not your fault at all."

Will looked up at him again. "You… aren't mad at me?"

"Of course not," Hannibal said. "There's nothing to be angry for. You knew there was something not right about Alana's questioning, and, while you may have handled it differently, you put a stop to it. I am proud of your insight and your desire to protect our

home." He ran a hand through his curls. "Actions, we can work on together, but an intuition like that is not something I could have taught you."

Will nodded slightly, looking down at his lap. "Should we… go to sleep now?"

Hannibal smiled, "Of course, love."

It was almost two in the morning when Hannibal woke. For a moment, he wasn't sure why he had woken, but a soft whimper from beside him told him why. Will was shifting and whimpering, deep in a nightmare.

Hannibal wrapped an arm around him and pulled him close. "Will," he said softly. "Will, dear, wake up."

Will pressed against Hannibal's chest, whimpering softly, seemingly still asleep but calming considerably with the closeness of his alpha. Hannibal sighed softly, settling in to rest. He didn't want to sleep, in case Will needed to be woken, so he watched his mate as he slept. Will settled down after a few minutes, then he slept peacefully, resting against Hannibal's chest. After a while, Hannibal slipped back into sleep as well.

The next morning, Hannibal woke to Will practically curled on top of him, a small crease between his eyebrows as he slept, whimpering softly. He shifted again.

Hannibal purred softly, letting the rumble and contact soothe his mate.

Will settled somewhat before slowly opening his eyes and looking at Hannibal.

Hannibal smiled gently. "Good morning."

Will pressed close, gripping Hannibal's shoulders tightly. "Morning…" he murmured into Hannibal's chest.

Hannibal chuckled, kissing the top of his head. "I could wake up like this every day for the rest of my life like this and be perfectly happy."

Will nodded slightly. "Yeah…"

Hannibal sat up a little. "What's wrong?"

Will sighed. "Nightmare…"

"Mm," Hannibal ran a hand along Will's back. "Do you want to talk about it?"

Will nuzzled Hannibal's chest slightly, letting Hannibal's presence reassure him. "...Dimmond and pa… they were alive and… they had me taken away for being feral…"

"Mm," Hannibal acknowledged, wrapping his arms around Will. "Even if they lived, I would not let them take you from me. I'll not let anyone take you, now."

Will looked up at Hannibal, eyes hopeful. "You mean it?"

Hannibal's fingers traced the mark he had left on Will's neck. "You are mine, now, and I am yours. Nothing but you can change that. And I defend what is mine."

Will's smile of relief almost took Hannibal's breath away before he snuggled into Hannibal's chest and purred loudly. Hannibal purred in return, so content in the moment. Will sat up, his smile turning mischievous as he ground his plump little ass against Hannibal's crotch. Hannibal’s eyes widened, sucking in his breath sharply in surprise as his pupils dilated.

Will watched his reaction, grinding down again slowly, his big eyes the picture of innocence, apart from his own dilating pupils.

"Will," Hannibal murmured, his eyes slipping closed as he let himself enjoy the feeling, growing hard beneath his mate.

Will moaned softly, wiggling slightly to position himself better, wishing his pajama pants and underwear weren't there. Hannibal moaned again, his hands resting on Will's hips.

Will managed a minute before whining softly, "Hannibal…"

Hannibal let out a chuckle. "You started this, dear one. If you want something, you need only ask."

Will bit his lip slightly, blushing.

"Unless you don't want anything," Hannibal said, raising an eyebrow at him.

"More…" Will said softly, "more please…?"

Hannibal's hips bucked up, his hardon grinding against Will's ass through their layers of clothes. Will gasped softly, eyes wide as his mouth fell open in a silent moan. Hannibal reached up, threading his fingers into Will's curls and pulling him down into a kiss. Will moaned softly, pressing closer.

Hannibal's hand slid down Will's back before slipping under the hem of his pajama pants. Will gasped softly, arching his back slightly to give Hannibal a better angle. Hannibal’s hand tightened on Will’s arse cheek, pulling him down as his hips bucked up again. Will moaned loudly into the kiss, gripping at Hannibal's night shirt. Hannibal purred, his finger ghosting around Will’s sensitive rim, making him shiver as slick quickly welled up, ready for more.

Will whined softly, trying to shift his hips and push back into Hannibal's hand, wanting more. The sudden growl from Hannibal made Will freeze before the world spun. Will found himself pressed face first into the mattress, his knees under him and his ass in the air, a hand strong on the back of his neck as his pajama pants and boxers were ripped away.

"Hanniba-" Will managed before both Hannibal's hands found his ass, squeezing and spreading him open. The hot breath was his only warning before Hannibal's tongue swiped hot and wet across his slick hole.

For a moment, Will forgot what breathing was. His numbed brain wondered for a moment if he'd died without noticing. Then, the most debauched sound he had ever heard welled up out

of his throat and he gripped at the sheets tightly. Hannibal chuckled softly, continuing to lick, purring happily.

Will writhed, moaning weakly as his pleasure began building more and more. "Hannibaaaal!" he moaned, his eyes rolling slightly as Hannibal's tongue teased the most sensitive areas.

"I have you, Will," Hannibal murmured softly, moving his fingers in gently and stroking Will's inner walls lovingly. "Just relax. Enjoy it."

Will moaned, his body quaking with the waves of sensation, his panting breath getting more ragged as Hannibal continued to pleasure him.

"Your sounds, Will," Hannibal said softly, kissing along Will's spine, "they make it hard to think sometimes… I always want more…" His fingers pressed down on Will's prostate, massaging it with sure strokes.

Will howled, cumming sharply as his mind whited out at the avalanche of pleasure. When he could manage to think again, he found himself on his back with Hannibal on hands and knees above him, smiling down at him.

Hannibal murmured words Will didn't recognize as he leaned in close for another kiss.

"What did that mean?" he asked when Hannibal pulled back again.

"My beautiful boy," Hannibal translated. "My precious and perfect one."

Will purred softly, smiling at Hannibal. "Teach me?"

"Of course," Hannibal promised.

Will leaned up, kissing Hannibal gently. Hannibal moved forward again and Will moaned softly as he entered.

Will's arms were around Hannibal's neck as he clawed at Hannibal's shoulders weakly, his body lax after just cumming but oh so sensitive.

Hannibal purred soothingly as he began thrusting, soon enough, he came himself, holding Will close and murmuring more words he didn't understand, they lay together for a while, simply taking the time to share warmth and love.

A few days later, Jack stopped by with another file for Hannibal to look at. Will was curled in his window seat again when Jack arrived, but moved over to curl up at Hannibal's side, eyeing the agent warily.

"Easy, love," Hannibal murmured, running his fingers through Will's hair.

Will relaxed slightly, but stayed next to Hannibal.

"Is that guy a fisherman?" Will asked Hannibal.

"Hm?" Hannibal asked, flipping through the information "I'm not…"

"Look there," Will said, pointing to the cord binding the victims hands. "That's a blood knot. It connects two lines and keeps them both strong. I used to use them when I'd fish the bayou years ago… Plus, the rope he's using isn't rope. That's braided line. That's what you use to land something big, like a cat fish or something." Will smiled slightly, seeming caught up in memories of fishing back when the days were happy.

"Very good eye, Will," Hannibal said. Looking to Jack, he said, "Your killer's a fisherman."

Jack stared at Will for a second before shaking himself. "A-alright…" He jotted it down in his notes quickly. "Anything else?"

Hannibal gave the rest of his findings, factoring in the fishing knot to give a more complete picture.

Will listened to Hannibal's explanation, tugging his sleeve slightly every now and then to add another bit of his own thoughts. Hannibal would nod, talking through how that could change the profile before adding it to his report.

Jack nodded, finishing his notes and standing. "Alright, thanks for the help. If… you need anything… you know how to get a hold of me…"

"There was one thing I wanted to ask of you," Hannibal said as he stood to walk him out. "The next time you want to know something, ask it yourself."

Jack at least looked ashamed. "Alana explained. You're usually rather evasive when it comes to life details, Hannibal. I didn't know what else to do."

"Ask," Hannibal suggested before changing the subject. "Perhaps we should have a dinner party sometime. Get to know each other a bit more on a… personal level, rather than just a professional one. We could invite your whole team."

Will looked up at Hannibal, wide eyed.

Jack nodded. "I'm sure the team would love to meet Will. I'm sure some of the office gossipers have told them already. They'll be curious who managed to snag your heart."

Hannibal smiled. "Let me know if there's a day that works best for everyone." They said their farewells and he turned to Will. "You seemed… less than excited by the idea. Would you like to talk about it?"

Will looked down. "I'm… not very good at… that kind of thing…" he mumbled.

"Because of the people?" Hannibal asked.

"Not completely… I never really… learned the best manners," Will said softly. "Ma taught me some, before…" His hands clenched slightly before taking a deep breath. "I know some… but, nothing fancy like a dinner party type thing…"

Hannibal waved a hand. “Something like that I could teach you. Besides, as I understand it, Jack’s team are… not what I would call ‘fancy’.”

Will nodded slightly. "But, it's something you enjoy doing… right?"

“It is,” Hannibal admitted.

"Then I want to make a good impression. I'm your mate, and I want to make you happy, too."

Hannibal smiled, pulling Will closer to kiss his forehead. “You do make me happy. Besides, we have time.”

Will purred softly, nodding. "Alright…"

Will spent the next few days, learning which silverware was used with what, table etiquette and how to behave.

It was two weeks later when everyone was able to coordinate for having dinner at Hannibal's. Will wiggled slightly, dressed in a dark gray suit that fit him perfectly, holding just enough blue accents in the tie and pocket square to make Will's eyes pop.

Hannibal moved closer, straightening his tie. "You look perfect, love."

Will smiled at Hannibal, feeling nervous.

Hannibal kissed his forehead, "You'll do wonderfully."

Jimmy Price arrived first, seeming nervous as he gave Hannibal a bottle of wine; a fair vintage, too, even aged properly. "I never really have the time to drink," was his explanation.

Will shook his hand, smiling and greeting him like Hannibal had shown him.

Beverly Katz showed up next, skipping Will's offered handshake and hugging him tightly. Will managed to keep calm, though he still seemed surprised.

Then came Jack and his wife, Bella. Will was still wary, but he shook his hand nonetheless.

Then came David Zeller and Alana.

Will greeted them both, though slightly coldly in Alana's case, but he still greeted her.

They all moved into the den to talk before the food was ready. Will was polite, talking with the different members of the team about their specialities and how they all help solve the crimes, seemingly interested in everything he was told.

"How did you and Hannibal meet?" Beverly Katz asked.

Hannibal smiled encouragingly. He had told Will that questions like this would come up. People liked to get to know one another, and it was bound to come up.

Will smiled. "He hit me with his car," he said pleasantly.

There were soft gasps from Beverly Katz, Jimmy Price, and David Zeller, and it seemed every eye was on Will now.

"Well, you did run out in front of me," Hannibal said, a smile playing on his lips.

"Not on purpose," Will said. "It was really foggy."

"And, naturally, that leads to mating?" Katz joked. "Maybe that's what you should try, Zeller."

Zeller blushed crimson and ducked his head.

"You have a prospective omega?" Price asked.

Completely oblivious… Will thought.

"How exciting!" Price smiled. "You'll have to tell me all about it."

Will glanced at Hannibal, wondering if he saw the same thing, wondering if he should speak up.

"That had certainly not been my intention," Hannibal said softly, answering Katz's question and drawing their attention off of Zeller and Price. "When I stopped, I saw someone who was hurt- however unintentionally- by my actions. I saw someone who should have been protected and cherished who was clearly denied that. When I chose to bring him home, it wasn't in hopes that we would someday be together. My only wish, then, was to help him find some kind of happiness." He smiled at Will. "I was lucky he found that happiness with me."

Will smiled, taking Hannibal's hand gently. Katz made an 'awww' sound. Price and Zeller both smiled.

Hannibal ducked his head slightly, his ears growing faintly red. "So, Jack. How did you meet your lovely wife?"

Bella chuckled.

Jack grinned. "Met her when I was in the navy in Italy. The men were all chasing after her gondola calling, 'Bella! Bella!' When I caught up, I asked her if she could be my Bella. So she accepted a date."

Hannibal smiled, resting his hand on Will's shoulder. He seemed content, happy even. Will purred softly, too softly for the other people to hear, more of a vibration than any actual sound.

Hannibal's smile changed, grew more genuine. His eyes shifted to glance at Will a moment, letting him know he felt it. Will smiled back, holding Hannibal's hand tightly.

As the party ended, Will pulled Zeller aside slightly. "You know… he's completely oblivious. If you don't make some kind of move, it'll never happen."

Zeller glanced toward Price, as if to make sure he was out of earshot. "Look, no offense, but-
"

"Not my business," Will said, "I know, but if you're waiting for him to say something first… you'll be waiting forever…"

Zeller closed his eyes, as if to keep himself from snapping at Will. “It’s… not that simple, Will.” He opened his eyes, showing more pain than Will had expected to see from the man who seemed to tend to hide behind humor or facts. “We work together. If he isn’t… receptive, it would throw the whole team off balance. Besides,” he paused, glancing at Price again, “I’d rather be around him as just friends than risk pushing him away.”

Will nodded slowly. "I understand…" He glanced at Hannibal. "I felt the same… I thought if I said something, Hannibal would turn me away… but now I know, taking the chance was the best thing I could have done."

Zeller sighed and ran a hand through his own hair, as if it needed fixing, but he seemed to have no come back.

Will shook his head. "I apologize. I shouldn’t pry. I just wanted to help."

Zeller smiled a tired kind of smile. “I know, Will. And thanks for that, but… well, like I said, it’s more complicated than that.”

Will nodded again, reaching to shake Zeller's hand. "Well, good luck with whatever path you take."

Zeller shook his hand firmly. “Thanks, Will. It was great meeting you.”

Will smiled. "You too."

When Beverly came up and gave him another big hug, she whispered, "I'm going to get those two together, even if it kills me. Wanna help?"

Will laughed in surprise. "Maybe. I'll think of something."

“Good, here, let me give you my number,” she said, enthusiastically pulling out her cell phone.

Will looked down. "I… I don't have a phone…" he said softly.

“Oh… Well…” Beverly glanced up as Hannibal approached them. “Maybe Hannibal could help you get one?” she suggested.

Will looked worried, but he nodded. "Yeah…"

“One of what, Miss Katz?” Hannibal asked, placing a reassuring hand on Will’s shoulder.

“A cellphone,” Beverly explained. “It would be good in case of an emergency, and I’d like to get to know him better, if that’s alright with you both. If nothing else, I’d be great practice

with socializing.”

Will shifted in worry, opening his mouth to apologize when Hannibal's hand on his shoulder squeezed reassuringly.

Hannibal chuckled softly. “No, I agree. It would be a very good idea.”

Will looked surprised, but he kept it to himself as Beverly smiled and wrote her number on a nearby notepad.

“Go ahead and call or text me any time,” Beverly said, giving Will another smile and hug. She nodded to Hannibal. “Thanks again for throwing this little get together. Dinner was amazing, and I think we all needed the break.”

The others agreed.

"It was wonderful to spend time with you all," Bella said, smiling at them.

"I'm glad I got to meet you all," Will said, though he didn't meet anyone's eyes while saying it, he had been doing well through the night but something had made him pull back again.

Once the farewells had been said, and Hannibal locked the front door, he moved over to Will, wrapping his arms around him. “You did so well tonight, darling.”

Will sighed softly, leaning back against Hannibal's reassuring warmth. "Really?"

“Do you think I would lie to you?” Hannibal asked, nuzzling his nose into Will’s curls.

Will shook his head slightly. "No…" After a few moments of silence, he continued, "I'm sorry…"

Hannibal pulled back to look at him curiously. "Whatever for?"

Will sighed, looking at his feet. "I… I don't want you to… feel like you need to get me a phone if-"

Hannibal shook his head. "Miss Katz made some very good points. If I'm honest with myself, I wish I had thought of it sooner."

Will nodded slightly, not looking up.

“What’s the matter, Will?” Hannibal asked gently.

Will bit his lip slightly, fidgeting.

Hannibal ran his fingers gently through Will's hair. "Talk to me, love… let me help…"

"I've… never had the means to… get things…" Will said softly. "My Pa… drank any money he made and… if I ever asked for anything… h-he…"

Hannibal carefully pulled Will into a firm yet gentle embrace. "I swear to you, Will, I'll never raise my hand to you in anger. I promise you." His fingers threaded through Will's hair, soothing himself as much as his mate. "I love you, Will. You are a treasure far greater than any wealth. I would give all that I had if only to see you smile."

Will fought back a sob, burying his face in Hannibal's shoulder, not sure he could find words to answer that. Hannibal didn't push any further, just holding Will close, running his fingers through his hair.

A day or so later, Hannibal brought him home a phone. Will was wide eyed, shocked by how fancy it looked. "This had to be so expensive," he said softly.

"Not terribly so," Hannibal said. "I've already added some numbers to it; my cell phone, the number to my office, as well as Miss Katz's."

Will nodded, looking up at Hannibal again. "Th-Thank you," he said softly, "I… thank you, Hannibal…"

Hannibal smiled, moving closer to kiss Will gently. "You are most welcome, darling."

Will smiled back, taking Hannibal's hands. "I'm so lucky… that you found me…"

"I think that I am the lucky one," Hannibal said softly, raising Will's hands to kiss them each.

Will chuckled softly. "We'll call it a draw, then."

Hannibal hummed thoughtfully. "I suppose I can agree to that."

Will smiled, hugging his alpha with a gentle purr. Hannibal nuzzled against him as he returned the hug.

Opera Night

It was several weeks later that Hannibal surprised Will with tickets to the beginning of the new season of the opera. Will had listened to some of the music in the evenings with Hannibal and was rather excited to see a live performance.

"Really?" Will smiled excitedly. "We can go to a live one?"

"Of course," Hannibal said. "You did so well at the dinner party, I thought it might be nice."

Will beamed, almost bouncing with excitement. "When is it?"

"Soon, dear one," Hannibal said, kissing Will's forehead.

Will chuckled. "What are we seeing?"

"Piangerò la sorte mia from Giulio Cesare," Hannibal said.

Will grins. "Can't wait. Will my suit be alright?"

"We could go shopping, if you'd like, but it should be fine if you want to wear the one we already have."

Will nodded. "If it'll work…"

"I'll be getting you more suits at some point," Hannibal confided, "but I'll let you decide if you want some of them sooner or later. It can seem like a lot, I know, and I don't want to overwhelm you."

Will nodded. "I like the one you got me… you said I looked good in it…"

Hannibal chuckled. "And you do. I'll make certain all of the clothes I buy for you accent your natural beauty. Blues to draw out your eyes… browns to match your hair…"

Will chuckled softly. "Will I also match you?" He thought of all of Hannibal's fancy suits and how good he looked in them.

"Of course," Hannibal chuckled. "Whenever you like."

Will smiled up at Hannibal happily, leaning close to nuzzle under Hannibal's jaw gently, purring softly. He'd come to love this; simple touches, gentle nuzzles and cuddles. He wondered why it affected him so, but he kept doing it. Just being in contact with Hannibal was enough to make Will's heart beat faster. Hannibal chuckled softly, running his hand over Will's back and shoulders.

Will purred softly. "Good," he said.

They did just that. The evening of the opera, Will was in a deep blue suit, black shirt, and silver tie and pocket square, while Hannibal was in a silver gray suit with blue tie and pocket square. Hannibal was greeted by several people, all of whom he introduced Will as his mate. Will didn't remember most of the people's names. He could tell that they were sucking up to Hannibal because of his standing and influence, so he ignored most of them after the initial polite greeting.

"Hannibal, dear~" an older looking alpha woman simpered as she moved up to the two after the show, smiling happily. "I missed you at the end of the last season. What have you been up to my dear?"

Hannibal nodded apologetically. "Ah, well, I do have a life outside the opera, you know." He put a hand on Will's shoulder. "I'd like to introduce you to my mate, Will. Will, this is Janet Windslow."

Will smiled politely. "How do you do?" He took her hand and kissed it, just like Hannibal had taught him. He could tell that she was an actual friend to Hannibal and he wanted to make a good impression.

Janet simpered at him before smiling at Hannibal. "Mate? Goodness Hannibal, I thought you would never find someone. Those poor socialites have lost their main target." She winked teasingly.

Hannibal was beaming proudly. "They'll find another, I'm sure."

Will smiled up at Hannibal. "Didn't realize I snatched you away from someone."

Hannibal shook his head. "No, no. Nothing like that."

"The unmated omegas tend to flock to unmated alphas," Janet said, "with Hannibal's fortune, he was a popular target for flirting." Her eyes move past Will and Hannibal. "Speaking of…"

"Doctor Lecter!" A smaller pudgy looking omega came hurrying over, smiling brightly. "I wondered if I would see you tonight, after your sudden personal time I didn't think that-" the man continued, chattering away and gazing up at Hannibal as if he hung the sun himself.

Hanniball nodded in greeting, unable to truly get a word in. Will could almost feel Hannibal's discomfort, see it in the set of his shoulders and jaw.

Maybe not discomfort, but Will was distracted by the taller dark skinned man with the pudgy omega. The man's dark eyes were squarely on Will, watching him silently, but the want in the man's eyes made dread slip down Will’s spine. He reached for Hannibal's hand, lacing their fingers as he ducked his head, not wanting to see the man's look anymore. Protect me, Hannibal…

"I think you should hold onto that thought," Hannibal said, cutting off whatever the omega had been chattering about. "Give us something to talk about at your appointment." He nodded to the two of them, gave a nod to Janet. "Excuse us." He turned, walking the both of them toward the exit.

Will pressed closer to Hannibal, still feeling eyes on his back. "I didn't like them…" he murmured softly.

"I am sorry, Will," Hannibal said softly. "Some people can be very rude."

Will nodded slightly, sighing, "It was a beautiful performance… then that happened…"

"That is life," Hannibal said. "We learn to navigate the bad and enjoy the good when we can. We must try not to let the unsavory spoil the things we enjoy."

Will nodded, squeezing Hannibal's hand. "Thank you… for bringing me."

Hannibal gave a small squeeze back. "I'm glad you enjoyed it."

The next few days passed rather quietly. Finishing the Odyssey made Will sad, but Hannibal had several suggestions for what to read together next, so he wasn't sad long.

"We could read Ulysses, or Don Quixote." Hannibal smiled at Will's eagerness, "Perhaps The Hobbit."

"They all sound good!" Will sighed, looking around the library. He loved it in here, so many stories to read. Though he preferred Hannibal reading to him, he was getting better at reading himself and enjoyed it immensely.

Hannibal hummed thoughtfully. "Why don't you read the Hobbit while I'm at work, and take that time to decide which we can read together when I return?" he suggested.

Will smiled, nodding, "Alright." He looked at his mate

"Maybe… we can go to a book store sometime?" he asked shyly. He knew Hannibal always said he would do anything for Will, but he still felt so strange asking, after growing up with his Pa, who was more likely to beat him for asking then he was to agree, he was still afraid to speak.

Hannibal smiled. "Absolutely."

Will beamed, hugging Hannibal tightly. "Thank you…"

They went to the bookstore a few days later. Will was browsing happily when a hand grabbed his shoulder. Will spun in surprise and froze.

The man that had tried to purchase him at the auction house was standing there. "It is you," he growled.

Will jerked free, hurrying to the next isle and grabbing Hannibal's arm. Hannibal glanced down, noticing Will's panic.

"What's-" Hannibal started, but then he saw Chilton round the corner and his back went ramrod straight. "I see."

Chilton seemed shocked, though he quickly collected himself. "Hannibal," he greeted, his eyes returning to Will who gripped Hannibal's sleeve tighter, eyes wide.

“Doctor Chilton,” Hannibal said coldly, placing his other arm on Will’s shoulder, pulling him closer.

Chilton frowned slightly

"What are you doing here?" He asked softly.

“Purchasing books,” Hannibal said, nodding to one of the bookshelves, “with my mate.”

Comprehension slowly dawned on Chilton’s face. "You-" he began, starting forward.

Will backed up, a soft whimper slipping out.

Hannibal let out a possessive snarl, putting himself in front of Will. “Doctor Chilton,” he said, his voice sounding far too calm, “I’d ask you to step back, now.”

Chilton stilled at the snarl, his own lips curled in a slight snarl as he looked at Hannibal.

“Now is neither the time nor the place to be having this kind of confrontation, Chilton,” Hannibal growled softly.

Chilton glanced around the bookstore before glaring at Hannibal again, then he turned on his heel and stalked away.

"He… he wanted me…" Will said softly, his hand shaking slightly where it gripped Hannibal's sleeve. "At the auction house… he…"

“I know,” Hannibal said softly, turning to wrap his arms around Will.

Will looked up, surprised. "Y-you do?"

Hannibal sighed softly. "He works under the same group as I do. At the last meeting, he mentioned his deal falling through, the auction house owner as well as the omega he'd intended to buy going missing… and he described you…"

Will nodded slightly, pressing into Hannibal's chest. "I'm sorry… if I hadn't asked to come…"

“I can’t hide you away at home,” Hannibal said softly, his words becoming soft purs to help soothe Will. “Something like this would have happened eventually.”

Will sighed softly, "I suppose…"

“Would you like to continue shopping?” Hannibal asked.

Will nodded. "As long as I can stay by you."

"I think that would be for the best," Hannibal agreed. Shifting to walk beside Will, one hand on his far shoulder to help ground and comfort him. "Come, show me what you've found."

Will nodded, trying to get his mind back on books and away from the hungry eyes of Doctor Chilton.

"Good morning," Will said, smiling as he came into the kitchen the next morning. "What's for breakfast?"

Hannibal looked up, smiling. "Good morning, Will. Just a protein scramble. I'm running a bit late."

Will nodded, moving to get plates and pour the coffee, helping how he could to move things along. "Do you have many appointments today?"

“No, just one today, but my patient asked to reschedule for an earlier time,” Hannibal plated up the food, kissing Will’s temple as he handed him his plate. “I should be back in three hours or so.”

Will smiled happily. "Alright, have a good day, I'll see you soon."

“Yes, very soon.” Hannibal closed the tupperware containing his breakfast and picked up the coffee Will had prepared for him. He gave Will one more kiss before heading out the door.

Will chuckled, eating his breakfast and moving to clean the dishes, thinking he would do some of the chores around the house to surprise Hannibal.

The knock at the door made Will smile as he hurried over. "Did you forget your keys-?" He opened the door and froze.

Tobias Budge stood there, smiling greedily down at Will. "Omega…" the man growled, his alphaen voice ringing through his word as he stepped forward.

Will, not as affected by this alpha's alpha voice as he was to Hannibal's, slammed the door against the man. He couldn't close it because Budge was already over the threshold, but it was enough to make the man stagger back and gave Will time to run.

Budge snarled, surging forward after him.

Will dashed for the kitchen, crying out as Budge grabbed his curls, yanking him back, and wrapping his other arm around Will's neck. Will grabbed wildly for the pepper grinder and swung it back, bashing it into the side of Budge's head.

Budge cried out in pain, dropping Will as he staggered back. One hand went to the trickle of blood from the grinder, the other reaching for Will again, grabbing him in an almost bear hug.

Will thrashed, going for the nearest thing, he bit down, hard.

Tobias dropped him again with a yell of pain as Will's teeth bit right through the top part of his ear, leaving a crescent shaped spot missing.

Will grabbed a knife from the knife block and spun, slashing at the alpha's hand. Budge hissed, pulling his hand back before Will could cut it.

"Get… away from me," Will growled, gripping the knife tightly and glaring at the alpha.

"Put the knife down," Budge growled. He tried to put as much force into the order as he could, but he was still slightly dazed from the head blow.

Will snarled, glaring at the man.

Budge's eyes widened slightly, feeling fear probably for the first time since getting his designation. He tried to hide it, tried to take control of the situation. "P-put the knife-"

"This isn't your territory. Get out, or I will call the police," Will snarled.

"This isn't over," Budge snarled.

"Yes, it is," Will said softly. "Now leave." He took a step towards the phone.

Budge snarled again and began backing toward the front door. When Will didn't follow, he turned and ran.

Will sighed, moving to close and lock the door before lowering the knife and sighing. He thought about calling Hannibal about this… but he would be in an appointment now… besides, he should be done in an hour or two.

Hannibal could tell something was different as soon as he opened the door. Franklin was dressed in a smarter suit than usual, and judging from the scent, Franklin was wearing omega perfume. The perfume was made to enhance the omega’s pheromones, and make their scent more powerful for alphas. A cheap trick, in Hannibal's opinion.

"Hello, Doctor Lecter," Franklin said, smiling at Hannibal in what could clearly be seen as a flirt.

"Hello, Franklin, please come in," Hannibal said, stepping back and holding the door. He was careful to keep his voice level, exactly as he'd always done it, showing no sign that he noticed the blatant attempts.

Franklin's smile faltered slightly, but he shook it off and moved into the room, sitting in his regular seat, watching Hannibal. Once Hannibal was seated, Franklin started talking about going to the same cheese shop as Hannibal, and how they had so much alike, and how he loved seeing him at the Opera, and being around the higher society and away from the 'mutts' and such.

"You're from Europe, yes? I've never been able to quite place your accent."

Hannibal's mouth was in a thin line at this point. "Lithuania," he said simply.

"Europe is so romantic," Franklin said with a sigh. "Can you speak Lithuanian then?" he asked curiously.

"Jei jūs nuolat klausia manęs kvailų klausimų, aš valgyti jums," Hannibal answered neutrally.

"What does that mean?" Franklin said in awe.

"I fear it does not translate well. Moving on," Hannibal said, looking at his notepad and trying to steer the conversation back to therapy. Franklin didn't need to know that he'd threatened to eat him if he continued to ask stupid questions.

"That performance at the opera the other day was simply amazing, wasn't it?" Franklin asked, not to be deterred it seemed.

"It was," Hannibal agreed. "It was a powerful piece, and done very well. Music has a way of evoking emotions. What emotions did it bring out in you?"

Franklin flushed. "Like… I could see the future…"

"What did you see?" Hannibal asked.

Franklin looked at Hannibal, almost wistfully before looking away again. "I noticed… you'd taken in a mutt as well," Franklin said softly, looking at his linked hands as he spoke. "That's a… sweet endeavor, but fruitless I would guess."

"We are not here to talk about my personal life, Franklin," Hannibal reminded him.

Franklin sighed, shaking his head slightly. "W-well… I'm just saying…"

"Focusing on my life will not help you to improve your own," Hannibal said, cutting off whatever excuses he might have tried.

Franklin sighed. "But… I want them to be the same…" he whispered.

"Of course you do," Hannibal said. "I have intimate knowledge of you and your life. But I am your therapist. Nothing more."

Franklin looked up at him, opening his mouth to argue when the door burst open.

Hannibal sat up straighter, frowning as he took in the sight of the other alpha, the blood drying on his forehead and a large part of an ear missing, the slightly disheveled clothing.

"Tobias!" Franklin gasped, standing quickly. "What happened? I-is that blood?"

"I fear my first aid kit is rather under supplied for your injury, Mr. Budge," Hannibal said, rising slowly. "May I ask why you've come here?"

Tobias snarled, glaring at Hannibal, "You… you tamed a feral… and I want him."

Hannibal shook his head, letting out a soft chuckle. "I did no such thing."

"That mutt is feral?" Franklin asked, looking shocked

Hannibal couldn’t hold back his snarl, and Franklin shrank back from him, fearing him for the first time. It felt… right somehow. He wanted this pathetic waste of time to realize how little he was. He wanted-

Tobias snarled, drawing the attention back to himself. "What do you mean?"

“He is not ‘tame’ by any means,” Hannibal clarified, attempting to regain his control. “And he is perfect that way.”

Tobias smirked. "If he was perfect, he would have checked before opening the door."

Hannibal let out another blood curdling snarl. “What have you done?” he demanded.

Franklin rushed between them, arms out. "Tobias! Wait! You said I could have Doctor Lecter if you had his mutt! Leave him alone!"

Something in Hannibal’s mind seemed to snap, the dam that held back all of his anger breaking. He stepped forward, his hands going to the sides of Franklin’s head, and with a quick jerk, so too did Franklin’s neck snap.

Tobias stared, wide eyed, as Franklin's body slumped to the floor. After a long beat of silence, he let out a fierce snarl. "How dare you!"

Hannibal didn’t bother with a retort, throwing himself at Tobias.

Omega Theft

Will looked through the peephole after the second knock, seeing the dark haired beta. Will opened the door. "Beverly? What's-?"

"Will," she said softly, the tone of her voice cutting through his question. He stilled, staring at her. "Will there's… there's been an incident…"

Will felt like his stomach was dropping through the floor. "Where's Hannibal?" he whispered, gripping the doorknob tightly.

Beverly shifted, not meeting Will's eyes.

"Beverly, where is Hannibal?" Will asked again, stronger this time, almost sounding hysterical.

"H-he's fine," Beverly said quickly, "but… there was a fight at his office. He's injured but refuses to let anyone in to treat him until he sees you."

Will blinked, confused. "Me? Why would-"

"Have you met Tobias Budge?" Beverly asked. Will's shudder answered that. "He attacked Hannibal, wanting to claim you for himself. I think he must have said something to Doctor Lecter because he demands to see you before-"

Will grabbed his jacket from the hook and hurried outside. "Take me to him," he said quickly.

Beverly closed the door behind him, glancing back once- worried about leaving it unlocked- and followed him quickly.

They arrived at Hannibal's office soon after. The smell of blood in the air- my alpha's blood- had Will whining softly.

Jack hurried over. "Will, we need you to get Hannibal to open the door. He needs treatment."

Will moved forward, not even listening to Jack at all, just moving to the office door and leaning against it slightly. The blood smell was stronger here, making Will whine louder, fear and worry for his alpha in the sound.

"Will," Hannibal mumbled inside. There was a shuffled movement, something falling over, and then the door handle was shaking as Hannibal struggled with the lock.

Will whined again. Hearing Hannibal struggling made him worry all the more.

As soon as the door was opened, Will was on his alpha, eyes wide as he took in the blood and Franklin's and Tobias's bodies.

Hannibal let out a soft hiss of pain but clung on to Will. "Are you alright? Will, are you alright?"

"I'm fine," Will murmured into Hannibal's bloody shirt. "I'm fine. Tobias never touched me."

"Good," Hannibal murmured. "Good…" He stumbled, nearly knocking them both to the ground. "Sorry," he mumbled quickly.

"You're hurt," Will said worriedly.

"I… am," Hannibal admitted. "But I'll be alright."

"Why didn't you let them help?" Will asked, helping Hannibal to the chaise.

"Had to know you were alright," Hannibal mumbled.

Paramedics rushed in and began doing what they could for Hannibal and arguing him onto a stretcher. Will watched, worried. When Hannibal tried to refuse the stretcher, Will stared him down, much to the relief of the emts. Hannibal sighed and laid down on it on his own. Will sighed softly, following the gurney with his alpha on it.

Jack stepped in the way, stopping Will. "Wait," he said softly, "I need you to tell me what happened. Something definitely did, so-" He stopped short in surprise at Will's savage snarl.

"My alpha is hurt," Will ground out, his hands balled into fists. "I am going to the hospital with him. Don't get in my way again. I'm going with Hannibal. You want answers? Wait or come up with your own. The dead aren't going anywhere." He pushed past the shocked alpha and climbed into the ambulance with Hannibal.

"Atta boy," Hannibal murmured, voice muffled by the oxygen mask.

Will took Hannibal's hand gently as the doors closed. "I'm sorry…" he said softly, "I didn't realize Tobias would come to challenge you…"

Hannibal shook his head. "It's alright, Will. It's alright. I'm going to be just fine. We are going to be fine."

Will sighed. "I wanted to tell you… but I knew you'd be in an appointment and… I-" He sighed again softly before explaining what had happened, Tobias breaking in, Will hitting him with the pepper grinder and threatening him with the knife. "I… I thought he might try to tell someone I was feral… but he went after you instead…"

"Will," Hannibal said, forcing himself into a sitting position despite the emt's complaints. "You can not take responsibility for the actions of Tobias Budge, or anyone. This is not your fault. Do you understand me? The only one at fault is Tobias Budge."

Will looked worried, he pressed on Hannibal's shoulders. "I won't, but please, lay down, Hannibal. You're hurt."

Hannibal searched his eyes for a moment, as if wanting to be sure he listened, then laid back down. "It's not as bad as it seems," he mumbled. "I'll be just fine."

Will sighed softly. "Even if it isn't bad… I want you to rest…" He looked at his hands, remembering that moment of panic before Bev explained. "I thought that…" he murmured, lacing his fingers and gripping tight, "I thought I'd lost you…"

Hannibal reached for his hand. "Can't get rid of me that easily," he said softly.

Will took his hand, kissing his palm gently. "Is that a promise?" he asked softly.

Hannibal smiled, letting his eyes slip closed. “Yes… I promise,” he murmured.

Hannibal was checked over at the hospital and was told he could go home as long as Will watched him and brought him in if anything changed.

"No driving yet," the doctor said sternly.

Will's face fell. He couldn't drive, how could he get Hannibal home?

Hannibal nodded slowly. “Thank you, doctor.” He pulled out his cell phone as the two of them moved toward the exit.

Will followed him, still looking worried. "I'm sorry… I-"

Hannibal paused, lowering his phone. “Will, you’ve done nothing wrong,” he assured him, pulling him closer with a gentle hand.

Will sighed softly. "I can't drive you home…" he said softly.

Hannibal shook his head. “That’s alright, Will. I was just going to call a car for us.”

"Oh…" Will said, nodding slightly, "Ok." He leaned against Hannibal's side, sighing.

"Thank you…" he murmured

Hannibal pocketed his phone, having finished ordering the car. “For?”

"For killing that other alpha," Will said, gripping at Hannibal's jacket as if expecting Tobias to suddenly appear and grab him. "I didn't like him… he smelled… wrong…"

Hannibal’s lips pressed together as he considered that. He supposed it was possible that Will had smelled something wrong about Tobias, perhaps something wrong with his mind… “I will always defend us,” he finally said, pulling Will close, nuzzling his nose into Will’s dark curls and breathing in deeply.

Will sighed, snuggling close. "I know…"

“Good,” Hannibal said softly.

The car arrived a few minutes later and they rode home. Will helped Hannibal inside and up to bed to rest before disappearing, about the time Hannibal began wondering where Will had gone, his mate reappeared. Will had his head down, his cheeks flushed slightly with embarrassment as he brought over the breakfast tray. On it, was a plate of slightly burnt scrambled eggs, sausage, and toast with a tall glass of orange juice.

“Oh, Will,” Hannibal said, getting up into a sitting position. “You didn’t have to cook. I could have-” He cut off, trying to hide his wince. He cleared his throat, as if trying to sound as if that was where he had meant to stop anyways.

"Sorry…" Will said softly, "I didn't mean to burn it…"

“No, no,” Hannibal said, reaching for the tray. “It’s alright, Will.”

Will handed him the tray, shuffling nervously. "I… made what you made me… that first morning." He scratched at his neck slightly. . "I… didn't know how to make the soup you made so…"

Hannibal smiled, patting the bed beside himself. “Would you join me?” he asked softly.

Will climbed onto the bed, laying down next to Hannibal. Hannibal reached over, running his fingers through Will’s curls with one hand as he took a bite with the other. Even with the burnt bits, it wasn’t bad. He hummed softly in appreciation. Will sighed, relaxing slightly as his eyes slipped closed, enjoying the warm touch.

“Would you like some?” Hannibal asked, readying another bite and offering it to Will.

Will shook his head slightly. "I'm alright."

"You're missing out," Hannibal said, eating the bite instead. "It's very good."

Will chuckled weakly. "You don't have to say that…" he said softly. "I'm no chef…"

Hannibal shook his head. “Do you think I would lie to you, Will?” he teased, taking another bite.

"Never," Will said, smiling slightly, "but you're a known flatterer."

Hannibal chuckled. “Alright, I’ll give you that one.”

A knock at the door surprised them both. Will stood quickly. "I'll get it." He hurried to the door, looking through the peephole. Two police officers stood waiting. Will opened the door. "Can I help you?" he asked politely.

The officers looked at each other, then back to Will.

"Where's the alpha of the house?" one asked, barely even looking at Will.

“He’s resting,” Will said. Glancing back, he was startled to see Hannibal at the top of the stairs. His robe hung loosely and his pajama pants rode low on his hips, leaving his bandages

plain to see as he made his way slowly down.

“Thank you, Will,” Hannibal said as he moved to the door. He put a hand on Will’s shoulder and murmured in his ear, “Wait for me upstairs, love. I’ll handle this.” He straightened up slightly and faced the two on his porch. “Hello, officers. What can I help you with?”

“Hannibal Lecter?” one of the officers asked.

“Yes.”

“We’d like you to come down to the station to answer a few questions,” the first officer said.

“Am I under arrest?” Hannibal asked, eyebrows raised in surprise.

“Well… no,” the second officer admitted, frowning. “But there’s been a report of Omega Theft filed against you.”

“And I assume, since there is no arrest warrant, that you’ve yet to find any evidence of said theft,” Hannibal surmised.

The first officer looked at Will over his reflective sunglasses. “Nothing concrete,” he admitted, directing the words to Hannibal. “Not yet.”

Hannibal sighed. “I’m not in the best of shape at the moment,” he said, gesturing to his injuries. “One of my patients attacked me in my office earlier today. If I could give you my statement here, I would greatly appreciate it.”

Will had stilled at the bottom of the stairs, fidgeting slightly and biting his lip like he did when he wanted to speak but was afraid to.

"I… suppose we could do that," the second officer said.

Hannibal stepped back, pulling the door open for the officers to enter and noticed Will's hesitation. "What is it, darling?" he asked, noticing the habit of Will's.

"Y-you have the bill of sale," Will said softly.

The officers stilled, looking at each other.

Hannibal sighed softly, nodding. “Yes… yes I do. Would you go and collect it from the library, Will?”

Will nodded, moving up to the library to get it.

"You have a bill of sale, sir?" One of the officers asked.

Hannibal sighed again. “It wasn’t my original intention to mate him. I was paying off his debt. Once he was freed of that, he chose to stay.”

“That doesn’t matter,” the first officer said bluntly. “Auctions are legal, what you do with what you buy is your own business.”

"That was one of the points of the report," the other officer said a bit more gently. "They have a bill of sale as well."

Hannibal’s eyebrows rose again. “That is… rather unfortunate. I can assure you mine is genuine, but I understand that my word isn’t exactly enough in this particular situation.”

The second officer nodded slightly, seeming sympathetic.

Will came back with the paper, handing it to Hannibal.

“Thank you, Will,” Hannibal said softly, glancing over the document before holding it out to the officers. “You’re welcome to take a copy of it to verify its authenticity.”

The second officer nodded, reaching for the paper when-

"Oh just cut the crap," the first officer said, moving towards Will.

Will shrank back slightly, eyes wide.

Hannibal’s back went stiff, fighting the urge to defend his mate. “Officer,” he said warningly.

"Did this man purchase you?" he asked Will, his alphaen voice ringing through the room. "Tell us the truth."

Hannibal growled softly. “Officer, I’d like you to leave. Now.”

Will stared at the man for a moment. "H-Hannibal paid my debt and got the bill of sale from the auction house boss… He saved me…"

Hannibal held back another snarl. “Are you satisfied?” he demanded of the officer.

The officer humphed softly, turning and moving to the door. "Come on, Rookie," he snapped at his partner.

The other officer stood quickly, obviously afraid of his partner's wrath. "I-I'm so sorry about him," he said quickly. "Sorry for the trouble. H-have a nice day." He hurried out after his partner, barely making it into the patrol car before the other started pulling away.

Hannibal closed the door, careful not to slam it in his anger, and locked it again. He closed his eyes, breathing slowly as he tried to let his anger fade away.

He turned away from the door, intending to go check on Will, and nearly ran into him. “Will, I- are you alright?” he asked, startled to find him right there.

"I'm fine," Will said, his hand touching Hannibal's bandages gently, "are you?"

Hannibal’s expression seemed to freeze for a moment, the mask that Will had only seen him use in front of others, as he kept himself from flinching away from the touch. “I’m alright,” he said softly before he managed to relax himself again. He reached up, running his fingers through Will’s hair. He looked exhausted, now that his mask had melted away again.

Will withdrew his hand quickly, looking worried. "Let's go back to bed," he said softly. "You need time to heal."

Hannibal nodded, taking Will’s hand in his and starting up the stairs. Will followed, holding his hand tightly.

“I’m impressed by you, Will,” Hannibal murmured, once they were settled back in the bed, his fingers running slowly through Will’s hair.

"Hmm?" Will asked softly, snuggled against Hannibal's side, his eyes closed as he relaxed with his alpha.

“You handled the situation very well,” Hannibal said, his hand stilling so that Will could more easily focus on the conversation. “The officer used a full forced alphaen voice, and you managed to tell him only what he needed to hear. I am very impressed.”

Will shook his head slightly. "I didn't do anything really… I don't really understand but… it doesn't affect me that much… Tobias tried it too but… it didn't work…"

Hannibal’s eyebrows rose again. “That is… very unusual,” he mused. “I am grateful to whatever the cause… though I can’t deny my curiosity over it.”

Will hummed softly, shrugging. "I guess… I don't know what to tell you."

Hannibal pondered this for a moment, remembering what Will had said about Tobias smelling "wrong". As he thought about it, he realized that he had experienced the same thing. When Franklin had come to his appointment wearing the perfume, Hannibal had despised it; not just for the perfume, but the feeling of revulsion to the flirting omega himself.

“I would say it has something to do with being mated,” Hannibal finally said, “only I have seen little evidence of such things. In my line of work, I would have thought something like this would have come up.” He stifled a yawn. “Perhaps tomorrow I’ll do some research into it…”

Will murmured something and Hannibal realized that he was already asleep, curled tightly against his side, his hand gently resting on Hannibal's bandaged chest. Hannibal chuckled softly, letting his eyes slip closed.

Will woke the next day and moved down to the kitchen to find it empty, a warming tray sat on the counter, full of breakfast for Will. After eating, Will found Hannibal in the library, pouring over an old book. "There you are," Will said, smiling. "I wondered where you were."

Hannibal looked up and smiled. "Good morning, Will."

Will moved over and hugged Hannibal, "What are you looking at?" He asked curiously.

"Studies on the effects of mating," Hannibal said.

Will cocked his head slightly, looking at the page. "It's said" Will read slowly, "that the pair establish a deep, met-a-physi-cal... conn...ection between them, and some sources even say that when the mark is placed on the omega, that happens during the mating, it's seen as a flash of lightning; however, this has not yet been established to be true…"

"Very good," Hannibal praised.

Will looked up at Hannibal. "What does that mean?"

"It suggests that there is more to a mate mark than simply leaving a mark," Hannibal explained. "It's not just a badge to say 'this belongs to me'. It hasn't been proven, but some omegas report feeling as though they were struck by lightning when the mark was made during intercourse."

"I felt that," Will said softly. At Hannibal's raised eyebrows, he explained, "When you bit me, when we first mated, it… felt like fireworks went off in my head. It was…" he shook his head slightly, not even sure how to explain.

Hannibal hummed thoughtfully. "And it was only during the mark that you felt it?" he asked. Will had begun to recognize Hannibal's 'doctor voice'.

Will thought for a moment. "No… there have been other times… but not as strong then."

Hannibal's eyebrows rose. "Oh? When?"

Will thought for a second. "When you killed Tobias…" he said, "and when you protected me from Doctor Chilton… It was…" He touched his chest, again, searching for words.

Hannibal waited patiently.

Will sighed softly. "I get… these feelings…" he managed softly, "almost like they're from another person sometimes but… I'll look at you and I get so proud… "he's mine"...and when I see something or someone hurt you I… I want to protect you like you protect me..." He looked up at Hannibal. "Is that… strange?" Will felt worry slipping into the back of his mind. Is this because I'm feral? Could it be my fault?

"I have heard similar things from all designations," Hannibal assured him. "Regardless of ability or station, everyone wants to protect what is theirs."

Will nodded slightly, looking at the book again. "What's that?" he asked, pointing to a small symbol next to the paragraph he had read.

"A footnote," Hannibal explained. "It connects this paragraph to a section later on."

Will looked at the symbol again, eyes curious. Hannibal turned to the appendices, found the symbol, and turned to the related section.

"True mates," Hannibal read aloud, "urban legend or rare truth…"

Will looked up at Hannibal. "True mates? What's that?"

“It’s the idea that certain people are meant to be together, whether by cosmic forces or some divine will. Many people deny its existence, and if it is true, it’s so rare that it has yet to be studied properly,” Hannibal explained.

Will’s eyes lit with understanding. "Oh! My ma used to read me fairy tales about that."

Hannibal nodded. "Fairy tales, yes. Most believe that to be all they are."

Will nodded slowly. "Does… it make sense in our case?"

Hannibal frowned down at his book thoughtfully. "In some ways, yes. I'd have to look into it further."

Will nodded slightly, looking around the library. "Can I… help somehow?"

Hannibal sighed. "Most of the books it would be in would be a bit too advanced for you… but I would appreciate the company."

Will smiled and nodded, moving off to get The Hobbit again and curl up on the couch with his head in Hannibal's lap as he studied the medical texts he'd gathered.

A few nights later, once Hannibal had healed, they sat in the den together. Hannibal brought Will a glass of wine and sat down with his own to begin reading Ulysses together. Will was excited and was listening intently, but after a while, he started to feel strangely drowsy. He blinked, shaking his head slightly.

“Will?” Hannibal said, looking up from the book. “Would you like to stop there for the night?”

Will sighed softly. "I don't know… I f...feel…" His nearly empty wine glass slipped from his slack fingers. Will waited for the crash, but then Hannibal set the glass delicately on the side table and gathered Will into his arms.

“We can continue tomorrow,” Hannibal murmured.

Will wanted to protest, wanting to read more, but his eyes slid closed as Hannibal carried him up to the bedroom.

Retribution

Chapter Notes

See the end of the chapter for notes

Will woke slowly the next morning, feeling very relaxed as he stretched and slowly sat up, looking around. "Hannibal?" The room was empty.

Will stood slowly, his legs shaking slightly, though he managed to stay standing as he wobbled to the door and down to the kitchen.

Hannibal looked up from the breakfast sausage he was preparing and smiled. “Good morning, Will.”

Will sat at the island, sighing softly. "What happened last night? I… I can't remember…"

“You must have been very tired,” Hannibal said. “We started Ulysses, but you started dozing off before you’d even finished your wine.” His smile let Will know that he wasn’t angry.

Will nodded slightly, still looking confused.

Hannibal set the sausage to begin cooking, washing his hands quickly before moving around the island to feel Will’s forehead. “Are you feeling alright?”

Will shook his head. "I don't know… I feel… strange…"

Hannibal’s lips pressed together, trying to suppress his worry. “You don’t feel like you have a high temperature…” He leaned close, breathing in deeply.

Will looked up at Hannibal, slightly confused, but holding still for him, if not leaning slightly into Hannibal's touch. Hannibal finally pulled back, seemingly satisfied.

“Strange how?” Hannibal asked as he moved back around to check on the sausages. “Just overly tired?”

Will nodded slightly. "I guess? I feel… fuzzy… I don't know…"

Hannibal nodded. “Well, let’s monitor it. If it gets any worse or persists for too long, we’ll go to the hospital.” He plated up the sausage with some fried potatoes and cherry tomatoes.

Will nodded. "Alright…"

They ate, chatting softly about little things before moving to clean up the dishes and moving to the den. Will curled up on the window seat with The Hobbit and Hannibal read his daily news articles. After a while, Will moved over to snuggle against Hannibal's side The Hobbit abandoned as Will’s mind refused to process the words. Hannibal shifted, draping his arm over Will’s shoulders as he continued to read. Will purred happily, relaxing into Hannibal's warmth.

Eventually, Hannibal huffed softly, shaking his head and setting the tablet aside.

Will looked up, surprised, "What's wrong?"

“Miss Freddie Lounds,” Hannibal said, keeping his voice even. Even so, Will could tell he was upset. “She’s a tabloid journalist, which means she can write almost anything, whether it’s true or not. She’s been a tick to the FBI for years, and has lately begun to latch herself onto Jack’s cases.”

“And Jack’s cases are yours,” Will said, realizing she must be after Hannibal too. Inside, Will wanted to growl, this woman was upsetting his alpha.

Hannibal sighed, soothing himself by threading his fingers through Will’s hair. “More than she knows,” he said softly.

Will blinked up at him, confused. Hannibal shook his head.

"How are you feeling?" he asked.

Will shrugged slightly. "Still groggy… but not quite so fuzzy now."

Hannibal nodded, leaning closer to kiss his forehead. "Good."

Will smiled, purring before sighing softly. "May we… restart Ulysses tonight? I'm sorry to ask since you already read it but-"

Hannibal smiled. "That's alright, Will. We can. I don't mind."

Will smiled softly. "Thank you, Hannibal."

“Of course,” Hannibal said.

A knock at the door made Will sigh softly, he sat up, letting Hannibal up. Hannibal stood, stretching a little as he rounded the couch.

Will smiled. "I'm going to find a snack in the kitchen."

“Alright,” Hannibal said as he moved to the door.

Will heard Hannibal and Jack move into the den, talking in low voices. Will smiled, thinking he would be a good host, he poured two glasses of wine and brought them out to the two alphas, the reaction he got however, surprised him.

"Will." Jack said, surprised, he moved forward quickly and tried to herd Will back to the kitchen without touching him, "you don't want to see this Will, it's-" But it was too late, Will had glanced at the folder in Hannibal's hands and froze.

The body was missing both legs, it was laying on its stomach with its arms positioned above it. Will thought it looked familiar but… wasn't sure… then he saw the man's face.

The crash of the wine glasses breaking made Will jump, he hadn't realized his grip had slipped.

Hannibal closed the folder quickly, setting it aside as he stood. He moved over, crouching to pick up the larger pieces of the wine glass.

"Jack, could you retrieve the towel from beside the stove, please?" Hannibal said softly, glancing up at him.

Jack nodded, hurrying out.

"I-I'm so sorry," Will managed, dropping to his knees to help clean up the glass, "I-"

"It's alright, Will," Hannibal said quickly. "I should have been paying more attention. You were being a good host, and I was not."

Will looked up at Hannibal. "I-it's him…" he managed softly, "the cop who-"

"Hush, love," Hannibal murmured softly. "It's alright." He reached out with one hand, running fingers through Will's hair. "You don't need to worry."

Will looked at Hannibal, confused. "I don't understand," he said softly.

Hannibal shook his head. "Later," he said softly, an almost pleading tone to his voice. He looked up as Jack returned. "Thank you, Jack." He took the towel and began dabbing at the wine. "Will, you know where the cleaner is, yes? Please throw the glass away and bring the cleaner."

"Yes sir," Will said softly, standing and taking the glass.

Hannibal looked up, watching him go as his own heart sank. He's never called me that before… It's too soon. He's not ready to know.

Will brought the cleaner in, glancing at the file again before kneeling to help. "I'm sorry, I wasn't… wasn't expecting that, I just…"

Hannibal shook his head. "I should have been more aware," he said.

Will sighed softly. "I still should have-"

"It's not your fault Will," Jack said softly.

Hannibal set the cleaning supplies aside and put his hands on Will's shoulders. "Jack is right, Will. You've done nothing wrong."

Will looked up at Hannibal again. "I…" He looked down again. "Then… I apologize for… breaking the glasses…"

Hannibal shook his head. "A glass can be replaced."

Will nodded slowly. "Alright…"

"Why don't you head upstairs, Will." Hannibal said softly. "I'll join you shortly."

Will nodded slightly, standing quietly and moving for the stairs.

"I'm sorry about this, Hannibal," Jack said softly. "I should have seen him sooner."

Hannibal watched Will until he was out of sight before he shook his head and faced Jack. "I let myself become too wrapped up in looking over the file." He moved over, picking it up and holding it out to Jack. "I'll come by your office tomorrow and look over it then."

Jack took it, nodding. "Alright, have a good night, Hannibal."

"Thank you for your understanding, Jack," Hannibal said, walking him to the door. "Give my best to Bella."

Jack nodded, smiling weakly. "Apologize to Will for me, yeah?" Hannibal nodded. Jack shook Hannibal's hand and left.

Hannibal locked the door and moved upstairs. Will was in the library by the fire, curled in one of the velvet wing back chairs, watching the flames.

Hannibal knelt beside the chair, looking up at Will.

"I apologize for cutting off your question earlier," he said softly. "It was not my intention to stop your curiosity."

Will shook his head slightly. "If I was out of line…"

"No, no," Hannibal assured him, reaching for his hands. "I… I didn't want to discuss it in front of Jack. That's all. You did nothing wrong."

Will looked up at Hannibal. "It was him though… wasn't it?"

"Yes, it was," Hannibal said. "I didn't want to attach myself to the case any further. They came to our house, and that is a matter of public record. Jack still asked my opinion on the case, which tells me that even with that knowledge, he trusts me to give my unbiased observations. I'm not certain he would if he knew what that… officer had done while here."

"And… can you?" Will asked, pushing his luck.

"The man is dead," Hannibal said simply. "His transgressions died with him. If Jack needs an unbiased opinion, I will give it to him."

"I see…" Will nodded, and after a minute of silence, he said softly, "Was… it as bad as the picture made it seem? Did he suffer?"

Hannibal pressed his lips together as he considered. Will caught a glimpse of his tongue as he wet his lips before speaking. "I didn't finish with the file, yet, but it seems he did."

Will nodded again. "Good," he said softly.

Hannibal stood, gently squeezing Will's hands, and kissed his forehead. "It may be socially unacceptable to be glad of any death, but I agree. He'll never hurt anyone again."

Will nodded before yawning slightly. "I may turn in early… after dinner…"

"Of course, love," Hannibal said, brushing back some of Will's curls before pulling back.

Will smiled at him. "We can… start Ulysses again tomorrow?"

"We can," Hannibal agreed. "Would you like to help with preparing dinner?"

Will smiled, nodding. "Yeah."

They went down to the kitchen and Will helped chop the vegetables for the stew.

A day or two later, Hannibal came to Will with a proposition. "Will, I would like to invite Jack for dinner, would that be alright?"

Will looked up from his book. "Sure? Why would you need to ask?"

"Because this is your home, too," Hannibal said.

Will smiled up at Hannibal. "Thank you, Hannibal."

“I know it isn’t exactly traditional,” Hannibal said, reaching out to tuck a curl of Will’s hair behind his ear, “but I want you to be my partner, my equal in all things. I want you to tell me when you are unhappy, and I want you to tell me when you want something. I want your voice, always.”

Will nodded. "Alright." He stood, smiling at Hannibal. "I guess we have a dinner to plan."

Will enjoyed helping Hannibal prepare the meal. He couldn't help with a lot of it, Hannibal said it was a bit too advanced for him just yet, but he got to help gather the seasonings and mix the ingredients for dessert.

"I can teach you more another time," Hannibal said as he slid the clay covered meat into the oven, "when it's just for us."

"Don't want me to mess it up for other people," Will said softly.

“That’s not it,” Hannibal said, setting the timer. He looked at it for a moment, as if he were… afraid to admit something. “I’m being selfish,” he finally said, setting the timer down. “I want your first attempt for myself.” He looked at Will. “Can you forgive me that?”

Will chuckled weakly. "Burnt scrambled eggs don't count?" he asked, shaking his head. "It’s fine… I'll look at the cook books and… maybe I can make something for you."

Hannibal moved closer, gently cradling Will’s face. “I want all of your firsts,” he murmured, lips nearly brushing Will’s.

Will blushed slightly. "Then they're yours," he said softly.

Hannibal smiled and stole a brief kiss before pulling back. "How is the dessert coming along?"

Will smiled. "Good, just need the last ingredient."

Will looked at the recipe card and blinked. "Blood?" he asked, surprised.

"In the fridge," Hannibal said. "The blood helps to thicken the dessert to the right consistency."

Will nodded, moving to grab it. "I wish I was as smart as you are Hannibal…"

"You are, Will," Hannibal replied, "you could be more perceptive then most others I've met. You can learn anything you set your mind to."

Will looked up at him. "You think?"

“I know,” Hannibal said, smiling.

Will beamed. "Thank you, Hannibal."

Will opened the door, smiling up at the taller alpha. "Hi, Jack, thanks for coming."

"I'm always glad to accept your and Hannibal's hospitality," Jack said.

Will led him to the dining room, gesturing to the third seat as Hannibal entered with a bottle of wine.

Will smiled at Hannibal. "Can I help?"

"No need, Will," Hannibal said softly as he placed the bottle in an ice bucket. "I have it ready, just a moment and we'll be ready."

Will nodded and smiled gently. Hannibal brought the food out, smiling at Will again. He pulled Will's chair out for him to sit before moving to serve the food.

"Tonight, we have pinhead pork belly with sugar cane skewers, clay roasted ham, and for dessert- my personal favorite- Sanguinaccio dolce."

Will hummed softly; it smelled amazing. He was excited to eat, but he waited. Hannibal didn't mind Will digging in when they were in private, but in public, it was custom for an Omega to wait for permission to begin eating.

Hannibal nodded slightly and Will started eating.

Jack sighed around the bite he took. "I need to get your recipe book sometime, Hannibal." He chuckled softly.

“Perhaps, some day,” Hannibal said. “Though, the secret is always in quality ingredients.”

Jack chuckled. "Maybe I need the number for your butcher, too."

Will was taking another bite when he froze, his heart jumped. *Pork belly… ham… stomach and legs…*

"The basement," Will heard Hannibal say.

"Have you done this before?"

"Yes."

"Will?" Jack asked. He sounded distant.

“Jack’s cases are yours.”

“More than she knows.”

“Will?” Hannibal’s hand was on his shoulder, drawing him back to the present. “Are you alright?”

Will jumped slightly. "What? Oh, sorry, I… lost in thought." He glanced at Hannibal, who was watching him carefully, as if he could see the puzzle pieces falling into place in his mind. Will held eye contact for a moment before slipping the fork into his mouth, eating the bite of 'pork' slowly.

After the meal was done, Will joined Hannibal in bidding Jack goodbye, smiling and gracious as usual, but as soon as the door was closed, Will was gone up the stairs. Hannibal reached after him, but let his hand fall to his side again. He went to clean up, letting himself find comfort in the routine of washing the dishes. If Will had figured it out, he would deal with it.

A while later, Will came down, clutching an old leather bound book. Hannibal wiped his hands on the dish towel, turning to face him. Will set down the book, pointing to a picture.

"The Studies for the Libyan Sibyl by Michael Angelo," he said softly. "I knew I had seen that before." He looked up at Hannibal. "It was you… wasn't it?"

Hannibal stared at the page, seeing the cop, laid by his own hands into the same position. “You only caught a glimpse of the file,” he said softly.

Will sighed. "It was enough…"

Hannibal finally looked up at Will, his mask falling into place. Will hated that mask. “And… what was it that brought you to the conclusion that I did it?”

Will looked at the book again, not wanting to see that face. "Dimmond… his bodyguards, my pa… after what that… man did to me…" He looked at Hannibal again. "And the way I fell asleep the other night…"

Something flickered in Hannibal’s eyes- regret, maybe?- but his mask remained. “But you’ve only now connected the pieces. What was it?”

"Jack mentioned your butcher. I know you do it yourself," Will said softly.

“Whenever possible,” Hannibal agreed, sighing softly. “What is it you intend to do with this knowledge, Will?”

Will shook his head. "Nothing… I just-"

“Nothing?” Hannibal demanded, his eyebrows raising.

Will shook his head again, eyebrows drawn. “Hannibal, I-”

“You are suggesting that I am a murderer,” Hannibal said, cutting him off. “That I kill them and cook them, and you are going to do nothing?”

Will stared at him, eyes wide. “But I-”

"What makes you think I would believe you wouldn't run to Jack at the first chance?" Hannibal asked.

Will sobbed softly. "Because I don't care!"

"You don't?" Hannibal asked. "How can you not?"

"You saved me, Hannibal," Will said, turning to try and hide his tears. "You helped me and… loved me when no one else would. You stopped my pa, and the boss and-" His voice broke in another half sob, his shoulders shaking, "and you don't even trust me…"

"Will," Hannibal said, his voice soft and gentle. His hands were on Will's shoulders, turning him to face him again. Hannibal's mask was gone, all the fear he'd been hiding on full display for his mate; fear of rejection, of revulsion, of hatred and anger.

"I love you…" Will whispered softly, "Why would I ever care about anything else…"

"Because you are a good man," Hannibal said softly, "and generally good men would take my activities poorly." He pulled Will into his arms, threading his fingers into his hair. "I do trust

you, Will. And I do love you. I should have known, the moment you chose to continue eating, knowing full well what it was you were putting in your mouth, knowing full well that you sat across the table from one who would put a stop to it if he knew… I should have trusted you with this sooner."

Will buried his face in Hannibal's vest, tears running hot down his cheeks. "I love you," he managed softly.

"I'm sorry, Will," Hannibal murmured, running a hand up and down along his spine. "I love you, too, with all my heart."

Will sobbed softly, a weak purr rising at the gentle strokes. Hannibal's chest rumbled with his own pur, hoping to reassure Will.

I trust you. I love you. I'm with you.

Will stayed there for a long time, his shaking slowly subsiding until he pulled back from Hannibal's now damp chest, wiping at his red eyes.

Hannibal held him all the while, and let him pull away as he chose to. "I didn't want to make you cry," he said softly, offering his handkerchief.

Will took it. "I just… I didn't mean to upset you… I just…"

Hannibal nodded. "I know, Will… I should have told you. I should have known you were clever enough to see it. I… I suppose I wanted to keep you innocent for as long as I could. As I said before, I want you as my partner, not subservient. I should have been upfront with you, but I hope we can move past it."

Will shook his head. "I just want to be with you…" he said softly. "I thought that… if you wouldn't tell me this that… maybe you would leave me if…"

Hannibal ran his fingers through Will’s hair. “I told you before, you are the only one that can make me leave you.”

Will nodded slightly before shaking his head. "I never want you to go…"

Hannibal kissed his forehead. “I’m with you, Will.”

Will managed a weak chuckle. "Thank you…"

"For what?" Hannibal asked softly.

"For being there for me…" Will said softly.

"Ah… for that, you are most welcome," Hannibal said.

Will smiled, taking Hannibal's hand gently. "Let's get to bed…" Hannibal nodded, following Will obediently.

They were fine for the next few weeks, talking and learning details they had hidden in fear of what the other would do. It was wonderful. Then one day, while Hannibal was out at a crime scene, someone unexpected showed up.

Will stood at the knock, moving to look through the peephole. A young woman stood there, her bright red hair in flowing ringlets around her.

Will frowned, but opened the door. "Can I help you?" he asked.

The woman smiled at him in a way Will would have almost called flirting. "Hello! Are you Doctor Lecter's mate?" she asked.

Will frowned again. This woman smelled like an omega, but Will could smell an underlying neutral beta scent. Had she put on omega perfume?

"Yes," he said, his hand tight on the doorknob. "May I ask who you are?"

The woman's smile faltered slightly before she could stop it, but Will saw. "My name is Freddie. Can you tell me your name?"

Will sighed softly. Hannibal had talked about her; Will understood now. "My name is Will. But that's all I am going to say to you, Miss Lounds. Now please leave." He pulled out his phone, dialing. His thumb hovered over the send button, watching her, and ready to close the door at any moment.

Freddie seemed surprised, but then she smirked. "You really think calling the police would scare me off, kid? I want to know about your mate and you're the best way to do that."

"Who said I was calling them?" Will said cooly, hitting call and putting it to his ear.

"Crawford."

"Jack, there's a crazy woman at the house trying to get in. She keeps asking me things. What do I do?" he said, putting on his 'scared omega' voice. Hannibal was at a crime scene with Jack, so Will would get two birds with one stone.

Freddie stood stunned, staring at Will in shock.

"Will?" Jack asked, surprised. "What do you mean there's someone there? What- Doctor Lecter, where are you- Listen, Will, lock yourself in. We're on our- Doctor Lecter would you-" Jack's words became muffled as he presumably lowered the phone and hurried after Hannibal.

Will looked at Freddie, raising an eyebrow slightly. "I think you're going to get your 'scoop', Miss Lounds."

Freddie seemed frozen, unable to move. Will heard a car round the corner a moment later and quickly closed the door, locking it and waiting. He could hear Jack outside, ordering Freddie onto the ground and arresting her. He heard the keys in the lock before it flew open and

Hannibal was rushing inside, his eyes finding Will. Before he knew it, Will was surrounded by Hannibal's arms, could feel his nose in his hair.

"Are you alright, Will," Hannibal murmured, pulling back to search Will for injury.

Will nodded slightly, a purr rising in his chest as he hugged Hannibal. "I'm fine… she didn't get close."

Jack came in then, knocking on the open door to announce himself. "I'm going to take her back to the station, but I wanted to check and make sure everything was ok here first."

Hannibal nodded. "Thank you, Jack."

Jack looked to Will and back to Hannibal again, nodding and closing the door on his way out.

Will nodded to Jack, giving him a weak smile. Once the door was closed, he looked up at Hannibal, his smile turning mischievous as he purred happily. "Did I do good?"

Hannibal's lips quirked up at the corner. "You did very good, Will. You're getting good at acting."

Will preened, smiling at Hannibal happily.

"My clever boy," Hannibal went on, voice dripping with praise. "You knew to call Jack, knew that he would arrest her. You knew that if you had called me…"

"You would have defended this home," Will said without hesitation, "and without proof of her wrongdoing, it could have been bad."

Hannibal's smile turned a little sad. "You are learning the way the world works. I'm so very proud of you."

Will frowned slightly, confused by Hannibal's sadness. "What's wrong?" he asked, worried Hannibal was upset.

"The world can be a cruel place, as you well know," Hannibal said, running his fingers through Will's hair. "I had hoped to shield you from it more, for longer. I am proud of you for overcoming the challenge, even as I wish you had not had to face it."

Will sighed, looking up at Hannibal. "Well, I don't have to face it alone."

"No, love, no you do not," Hannibal smiled more genuinely again. "My clever boy."

Will purred, leaning in to nuzzle under Hannibal's chin happily. Will was starting to grow, getting stronger and taller, since living with Hannibal, eating properly, and being cared for. Hannibal let out a pur of his own, holding Will close.

A few weeks later, Hannibal rose early, having a seminar across town to attend.

"Will, I need to be going soon, are you-?"

Will groaned weakly, looking up at Hannibal with blurry eyes, his cheeks flushed with fever as he panted softly.

"Oh, Will," Hannibal said, feeling his flushed forehead and finding him burning up. Will whined weakly, leaning into Hannibal's touch. Hannibal glanced at his watch. "I want you to spend today resting," he instructed.

Will sighed softly. "I was supposed to go out with Bev today…"

"Do I need to stay and ensure you rest?" Hannibal asked.

Will shook his head slightly. "The seminar is mandatory… I'll be ok…"

Hannibal sighed. "You can go with Miss Katz once you're better, Will. I promise."

Will nodded slightly. "I'll text her…"

“Good,” Hannibal said, leaning down to gently kiss his forehead. “I’ll be home late tonight.”

Will smiled weakly at him before coughing. "Could you bring me some water before you go?"

“Of course, love.”

Will smiled, snuggling back down into the blankets and sighing softly.

Will dosed on and off through the morning until around two o'clock.

Will checked his phone and saw a "get better soon" text from Beverly and plans to go next week. He sighed and snuggled back down, he needed to sleep off whatever this was... he didn't want Hannibal to worry.

Then Will heard the door open. He thought it must be Hannibal returning early, but then the footsteps were too soft for Hannibal. Then he heard the pantry door open. Standing, Will moved downstairs. He got to the dining room just as Freddie Lounds rushed in, pulling out her phone.

"Breaking and entering, Miss Lounds?" Will asked.

Freddie jumped, dropping her phone and pulling a small handgun. "D-don't come near me!"

Will tilted his head. "You really shouldn't come into someone's house uninvited… It's very rude…"

Freddie backed up, eyes wide. "Stay back, I will shoot if-" Then her foot snagged on the edge of the rug and she fell backwards with a cry and a sickening squelch!

Will's eyes widened in shock. Freddie had fallen across the dining table, directly onto the antlered centerpiece. She jerked and choked as blood began filling her lungs and covered the dark table.

Will quickly fumbled with his phone.

"Hello, Will," Hannibal answered.

"Hannibal," Will choked out, "I need you… I need you- please Hannibal, I- I don't-"

Will could hear movement in the background of the call, someone calling after Hannibal.

"I'm coming home," Hannibal assured him, though his voice was tight from hearing Will's tone. "I'll be there as soon as I can. Are you safe, Will?"

"Y-yeah…" Will managed, "but- sh-she… I don't…"

"She?" Hannibal asked.

It was at that moment that Freddie let out a gurgling cough.

"Will?" Hannibal's voice grew urgent, "What was that? Are you-"

"Wasn't me," Will assured him. "It… it's Freddie. She fell…" he found himself pacing, nervous energy making him antsy. "I don't know how to-"

Hannibal was quiet for a long moment. “How badly is she injured?” he finally asked.

Will let out a shaky breath. "There's a lot of blood… She… she fell on the table centerpiece."

"Is she alone?" Hannibal asked. "Did anyone know she was coming over?"

"I'm not sure," Will said. "I caught her coming out of the pantry… she had her phone out but…"

“Turn it off,” Hannibal instructed. “I’ll check it when I get home. Make sure all the curtains are closed.”

Will hurried to pick up the phone and turn it off, then closed any curtains that were open.

When he got back to Freddie, she was very still. Will reached out, then drew back with a choked noise. "Oh god, I… I think she's dead…"

"It's going to be fine, Will," Hannibal said. "Are the curtains closed?"

"Y-yeah…" Will managed, looking around.

"I need you to figure out how she got in," Hannibal said. "Check the windows and doors. Make sure they're all locked and secure."

Will nodded, hurrying to check. "I… I heard her come in through the front door… I would have thought it was you but… her footsteps were too soft…"

“My clever boy,” Hannibal praised. “Check all the doors and windows, just to be certain.”

Will hurried around, checking them all. He noticed scratch marks around the front door lock and told Hannibal about it. "Ok, they're all closed up… what do I do now?"

“She probably used a tool to open the lock from the outside that left the scratches,” Hannibal explained. “Now, I want you to go back and rest. I’ll be home in about an hour and we can deal with it then.”

Will looked back towards Freddie before sighing. "Alright… See you soon." He moved up to the bedroom and laid down again, thinking there was no way he'd be able to fall asleep.

“I love you, Will,” Hannibal said softly.

"Love you, too," Will said softly. It felt like only a moment later that Will felt the bed dip. He jumped, eyes opening and looking around to see Hannibal.

“Easy, love, easy,” Hannibal soothed. “You fell asleep. It’s alright.”

Will nodded slightly, trying to sit up but finding no strength to do so. "F-Freddie?"

“Still on the table,” Hannibal said softly. “I… wanted to see if you wanted to help. You don’t have to, if you don’t want to.”

Will sighed. "I would but… I don't think I have the energy…"

Hannibal checked his forehead again, sighing. "The adrenaline from before must have sapped your strength. Get some more rest. I'll take care of it."

Will sighed softly, nodding. "Ok…" he snuggled down again, sighing. "I love you…"

Hannibal leaned close, pressing a kiss to Will’s forehead before going down to the dining room to see the tabloid reporter, laying across the table, almost like his own art.

“Is that what I am, now?” Freddie asked. She stood at the head of the table, her hands resting on the back of what was always Hannibal’s chair, looking down at her own dead body. “Your latest artwork?” She looked up at him with her dead, glazed eyes.

“Of course not,” Hannibal said softly, moving around the side of the table. “You are Will’s.”

Freddie chuckled softly. "I see… I suppose I should have known that he would be in on it all, too…"

"You are his first," Hannibal said, "on his own." He folded her arms across her chest, and lifted from the table, carrying her bridal style through the kitchen and into the basement. The illusion of Freddie followed him, watching with her unblinking eyes.

"Should I be proud?" she demanded. "Grateful?"

"Of course not," Hannibal said. "I am both of those things enough for the both of us. You needn't feel anything about it. You are dead. Feeling is for the living." He laid her down, still attached to the centerpiece, in the large freezer.

Freddie looked at the small gun, still clutched in her hand. "If I hadn't tripped on that rug…"

“If you had hurt my Will, I would have hunted you to the ends of the earth,” Hannibal snarled. “It’s better this way.” He took the gun, closed the ice chest, and moved back upstairs. He picked up her phone and turned it on. “Now, let’s see if you had any backup, shall we?” he said, not glancing at the specter of Freddie still watching him.

Hannibal looked through the phone, finding nothing to show that she had back up, besides the half dialed number for Jack's office. After turning the phone to airplane mode, he began searching for evidence she had found.

In her gallery, he found several pictures of his basement and the freezer she now resided in. He also found some that seemed to be from the days before, pictures of Hannibal and Will working in the backyard garden or on their evening walks. He quickly checked her email and digital backup files to see if she had saved them anywhere else. There was an article she had started about Will and himself, questioning Hannibal's sudden mate and if there was something else going on. He also found Will’s texts to Beverly making plans to meet today, Freddie must have used a scanner to find out when they would both be out of the house.

He deleted it all, completely wiping the phone and all of her back up apps of anything involving himself or Will. Then he started the long task of cleaning up the blood.

Hannibal looked up at a soft shuffle and saw Will moving towards the kitchen to get more water, still looking flushed and feverish. He straightened, stretching as he followed Will. He looked at the clock and realized he had been working for almost three hours.

Will yawned softly. "Are you alright?" he asked, looking at Hannibal. "Can I… help?"

“I’m alright, darling,” Hannibal said before stifling a yawn. “I think I’ve done all that I can for tonight.”

Will nodded slightly. Sighing softly, he looked up at Hannibal again, his eyes still feverishly bright. "Come to bed?" he asked softly.

"I think that would be best, yes," Hannibal said.

Will smiled and moved towards the bedroom again. Hannibal caught a glimpse of Freddie watching them from the dining room door before she faded and vanished. He shook himself and caught up with Will. Sometimes he let his imagination run away with him…

Hannibal spent the next morning on the phone, explaining why he had left the seminar early, saying his mate had been very sick and needed him there, having called him when he had taken a turn for the worse.

Once Will was feeling better, he joined Hannibal in cleaning up what remained before moving to the basement. Will looked at all the machinery with wide eyes. "What is all this?"

“Butchering equipment, mostly,” Hannibal said. “And some… art supplies.”

Will looked around at all the strange things. "Will… I get to use them?"

"With training and practice," Hannibal assured him. “And you’ve provided us a great starting point to your learning.” He moved over to the freezer where Freddie Lounds rested.

Will watched, eyes wide and attentive, wanting to learn. Hannibal showed Will each machine, explaining what they each did and how to use them safely before they began on Freddie's body.

"Will she be art?" Will asked, "or is she too close to this?"

Hannibal frowned thoughtfully. "We could take a holiday, leave her far from us… but it could still be risky. We could simply use every piece of her until there is nothing left for them to find. The choice is ultimately yours, love."

Will looked at the body of Freddie Lounds again, thoughtful. "I guess… we use everything."

“We can make art together once we’re done with her,” Hannibal promised, rolling up his sleeves. “Now, let’s get to work, shall we?”

Will nodded, smiling at him.

That night, Will dug out the cook books, searching through them and finding one he thought he could handle. "Pork loin with Cumberland sauce," Will said with a smile, "My first cooking with my first 'kill'."

Hannibal moved up behind him, kissing his temple. "Let me know if you need a sous chef."

Will chuckled softly. "I wouldn't say no to the company, and you'd be here in case it goes bad."

Thankfully, Will managed it and they soon sat down to eat.

“It turned out very well,” Hannibal praised once they’d begun eating.

"That's good," Will sighed, then he chuckled. "You know… when I was little, my ma would say I was lucky not to burn water."

“The only way to get better is to practice,” Hannibal said. “And perhaps keep a fire extinguisher on hand.”

Will chuckled softly and nodded.

"You seldom speak of your mother," Hannibal said. "May I ask why?"

Will tensed slightly before sighing and setting down his fork.

“If you’d rather not speak of it, you don’t have to,” Hannibal assured him gently.

Will shook his head. "It's fine," he sighed, "I honestly don't know much… she… disappeared when I was twelve… I never knew what happened, one day she was there and the next…"

Hannibal listened, nodding slightly, though he didn’t interrupt.

"Pa started drinking more and… started hating omegas… so when I presented… he…" Will sighed softly, running a hand through his hair as if attempting to self soothe. He jumped slightly when Hannibal's hand touched his own still resting on the table.

"Will," Hannibal murmured softly, "we can look for her, if you'd like."

Will looked up, shocked. "Wh-what? We can?"

Hannibal seemed to hesitate in a way that indicated more that he was choosing his words carefully, rather than reluctance. “I think learning what happened could provide insight, clarity, and closure. It is in the past, and I understand if you’d rather not dig into such painful memories. I leave the choice to you, but I want you to know that it is an option for you.”

Will looked at their joined hands. "I… always wondered… why she left me… I think… I'd like to know…"

"We'll find answers," Hannibal promised.

Will smiled. "Thank you, Hannibal…"

Chapter End Notes

Ok. We ARE going to continue this one, but we have to take a break because of some other things we've got... hopefully we'll get to it soon.

Thanks guys!

Please drop by the Archive and comment to let the creator know if you enjoyed their work!